CATHARINE FURZE

Mark Rutherford

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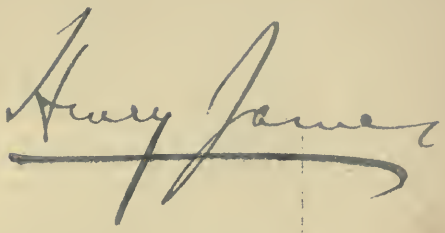

CATHARINE FURZE.

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CATHARINE FURZE

BY

MARK RUTHERFORD

EDITED BY HIS FRIEND

REUBEN SHAPCOTT

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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T. FISHER UNWIN

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CATHARINE FURZE.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a bright, hot, August Saturday in the market town of Eastthorpe, in the eastern Midlands, in the year 1840. Eastthorpe lay about five miles on the western side of the Fens, in a very level country on the banks of a river, broad and deep, but with only just sufficient fall to enable its long-lingering waters to reach the sea. It was an ancient market town, with a six-arched stone bridge, and with a High Street from which three or four smaller and narrower streets connected by courts and alleys diverged at right angles. In the middle of the town was the church, an immense building, big enough to hold half Eastthorpe, and celebrated for its beau-

tiful spire and its peal of eight bells. Round the church lay the churchyard, fringed with huge elms, and in the Abbey Close, as it was called, which was the outer girdle of the churchyard on three sides, the fourth side of the square being the High Street, there lived in 1840 the principal doctor, the lawyer, the parson, and two aged gentlewomen with some property, who were daughters of one of the former partners in the bank, had been born in Eastthorpe, and had scarcely ever quitted it. Here also were a young ladies' seminary and an ancient grammar school for the education of forty boys, sons of freemen of the town. The houses in the Close were not of the same class as the rest; they were mostly old red brick, with white sashes, and they all had gardens, long, narrow, and shady, which, on the south side of the Close, ran down to the river. One of these houses was even older, black-timbered, gabled, plastered, the sole remains, saving the church, of Eastthorpe as it was in the reign of Henry the Eighth.

Just beyond the church, going from the bridge, the High Street was so wide that the houses on either side were separated by a space of over two

hundred feet. This elongated space was the market-place. In the centre was the Moot Hall, a quaint little building, supported on oak pillars, and in the shelter underneath the farmers assembled on market day. All round the Moot Hall, and extending far up and down the street, were cattle-pens and sheep-pens, which were never removed. Most of the shops were still bow-windowed, with small panes of glass, but the first innovation, indicative of the new era at hand, had just been made. The druggist, as a man of science and advanced ideas, had replaced his bow-window with plate-glass, had put a cornice over it, had stuccoed his bricks, and had erected a kind of balustrade of stucco, so as to hide as much as possible the attic windows, which looked over, meekly protesting. Nearly opposite the Moot Hall was the Bell Inn, the principal inn in the town. There were other inns, respectable enough, such as the Bull, a little higher up, patronised by the smaller commercial travellers and farmers, but the entrance passage to the Bull had sand on the floor, and carriers made it a house of call. To the Bell the two coaches came which went through Eastthorpe, and there

they changed horses. Both the Bull and the Bell had market dinners, but at the Bell the charge was three-and-sixpence; sherry was often drunk, and there the steward to the Honourable Mr. Eaton, the principal landowner, always met the tenants. The Bell was Tory and the Bull was Whig, but no stranger of respectability, Whig or Tory, visiting Eastthorpe could possibly hesitate about going to the Bell, with its large gilded device projecting over the pathway, with its broad archway at the side always freshly gravelled, and its handsome balcony on the first floor, from which the Tory county candidates, during election times, addressed the free and independent electors and cattle.

Eastthorpe was a malting town, and down by the water were two or three large malthouses. The view from the bridge was not particularly picturesque, but it was pleasant, especially in summer, when the wind was south-west. The malthouses and their cowls, the wharves and the gaily painted sailing barges alongside, the fringe of slanting willows turning the silver-gray sides of their foliage towards the breeze, the island in

the middle of the river with bigger willows, the large expanse of sky, the soft clouds distinct in form almost to the far distant horizon, and, looking eastwards, the illimitable distance towards the fens and the sea—all this made up a landscape, more suitable perhaps to some persons than rock or waterfall, although no picture had ever been painted of it, and nobody had ever come to see it.

Such was Eastthorpe. For hundreds of years had the shadow of St. Mary's swept slowly over the roofs underneath it, and, of all those years, scarcely a line of its history survived, save what was written in the churchyard or in the church registers. The town had stood for the Parliament in the days of the Civil War, and there had been a skirmish in the place; but who fought in it, who were killed in it, and what the result was, nobody knew. Half a dozen old skulls of much earlier date and of great size were once found in a gravel pit two miles away, and were the subject of much talk, some taking them for Romans, some for Britons, some for Saxons, and some for Danes. As it was impossible to be sure if they were Christian, they could not be put in consecrated

ground; they were therefore included in an auction of dead and live stock, and were bought by the doctor. Surnames survived in Eastthorpe with singular pertinacity, for it was remote from the world, but what was the relationship between the scores of Thaxtons, for example, whose deaths were inscribed on the tombstones, some of them all awry and weather-worn, and the Thaxtons of 1840, no living Thaxton could tell, every spiritual trace of them having disappeared more utterly than their bones. Their bones, indeed, did not disappear, and were a source of much trouble to the sexton, for in digging a new grave they came up to the surface in quantities, and had to be shovelled in and covered up again, so that the bodily remains of successive generations were jumbled together, and Puritan and Georgian Thaxtons were mixed promiscuously with their descendants. Nevertheless, Eastthorpe had really had a history. It had known victory and defeat, love, hatred, intrigue, hope, despair, and all the passions, just as Elizabeth, King Charles, Cromwell, and Queen Anne knew them, but they were not recorded.

It was a bright, hot, August Saturday, as we have said, and it was market day. Furthermore, it was half-past two in the afternoon, and the guests at Mr. Furze's had just finished their dinner. Mr. Furze was the largest ironmonger in Eastthorpe, and sold not only ironmongery, but ploughs and all kinds of agricultural implements. At the back of the shop was a small foundry where all the foundry work for miles round Eastthorpe was done. It was Mr. Furze's practice always to keep a kind of open house on Saturday, and on this particular day, at half-past two, Mr. Bellamy, Mr. Chandler, Mr. Gosford, and Mr. Furze were drinking their whiskey-and-water and smoking their pipes in Mr. Furze's parlour. The first three were well-to-do farmers, and with them the whiskey-and-water was not a pretence. Mr. Furze was a tradesman, and of a different build. Strong tobacco and whiskey at that hour and in that heat were rather too much for him, and he played with his pipe and drank very slowly. The conversation had subsided for a while under the influence of the beef, Yorkshire pudding, beer, and spirits, when Mr. Bellamy observed—

"Old Bartlett's widow still a-livin' up at the Croft?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gosford, after filling his pipe again and pausing for at least a minute, "Bartlett's dead."

"Bartlett wur a slow-coach," observed Mr. Chandler, after another pause of a minute, "so wur his mare. I mind me I wur behind his mare about five year ago last Michaelmas, and I wur well-nigh perished. I wur a-goin' to give her a poke with my stick, and old Bartlett says, 'Doan't hit her, doan't hit her; yer can't alter her.'"

The three worthy farmers roared with laughter, Mr. Furze smiling gently.

"That was a good 'un," said Mr. Bellamy.

"Ah," replied Chandler, "I mind that as well as if it wur yesterday."

Mr. Bellamy at this point had to leave, and Mr. Furze was obliged to attend to his shop. Gosford and Chandler, however, remained, and Gosford continued the subject of Bartlett's widow.

"What's she a-stayin' on for up there?"

"Old Bartlett's left her a goodish bit."

"She wur younger than he."

A dead silence of some minutes.

"She ain't a-goin' to take the Croft on herself," observed Gosford.

"Them beasts of the squire's," replied Chandler, "fetched a goodish lot. Scaled just over ninety stone apiece."

"Why doan't you go in for the widow, Chandler?"

Mr. Chandler was a widower.

"Eh!" (with a nasal tone and a smile)—"bit too much for me."

"Too much? Why, there ain't above fourteen stone of her. Keep yer warm o' nights up at your cold place."

Mr. Chandler took the pipe out of his mouth, put it inside the fender, compressed his lips, rubbed his chin, and looked up to the ceiling.

"Well, I must be a-goin'."

"I suppose I must too," and they both went their ways, to meet again at tea-time.

At five punctually all had again assembled, the additions to the party being Mrs. Furze and her daughter Catharine, a young woman of nineteen. Mrs. Furze was not an Eastthorpe lady; she came

from Cambridge, and Mr. Furze had first seen her when she was on a visit in Eastthorpe. Her father was a draper in Cambridge, which was not only a much bigger place than Eastthorpe, but had a university, and Mrs. Furze talked about the university familiarly, so that, although her education had been slender, a university flavour clung to her, and the farmers round Eastthorpe would have been quite unable to determine the difference between her and a senior wrangler, if they had known what a senior wrangler was.

"Ha," observed Mr. Gosford, when they were seated, "I wur sayin', Mrs. Furze, to Chandler as he ought to go in for old Bartlett's widow. Now what do *you* think? Wouldn't they make a pretty pair?" and he twisted Chandler's shoulders round a little till he faced Mrs. Furze.

"Don't you be a fool, Gosford," said Chandler in good temper, but, as he disengaged himself, he upset his tea on Mrs. Furze's carpet.

"Really, Mr. Gosford," replied Mrs. Furze, with some dignity and asperity, "I am no judge in such matters. They are best left to the persons concerned."

"No offence, ma'am, no offence."

Mrs. Furze was not quite a favourite with her husband's friends, and he knew it, but he was extremely anxious that their dislike to her should not damage his business relationships with them. So he endeavoured to act as mediator.

"No doubt, my dear, no doubt, but at the same time there is no reason why Mr. Gosford should not make any suggestion which may be to our friend Chandler's advantage."

But Mr. Gosford was checked, and did not pursue the subject. Catharine sat next to him.

"Mr. Gosford, when may I come to Moat Farm again?"

"Lord, my dear, whenever you like; you know that. Me and Mrs. G. is always glad to see you. *When*ever you please," and Mr. Gosford instantly recovered the good-humour which Mrs. Furze had suppressed.

"Don't forget us," chimed in Mr. Bellamy. "We'll turn out your room and store apples in it if you don't use it oftener."

"Now, Mr. Bellamy," said Catharine, holding up her finger at him, "you'll be sick of me at last.

You've forgotten when I had that bad cold at your house, and was in bed there for a week, and what a bother I was to Mrs. Bellamy."

"Bother!" cried Bellamy—"bother! Lord have mercy on us! why the missus was sayin' when you talked about bother, my missus says, 'I'd sooner have Catharine here, and me have tea up there with her, notwithstanding there must be a fire upstairs and I've had to send Lucy to the infirmary with a whitlow on her thumb—yes, I would, than be at a many tea-parties I know.'"

Mrs. Furze gave elaborate tea-parties, and was uncomfortably uncertain whether or not the shaft was intended for her.

"My dear Catharine, I shall be delighted if you go either to Mr. Gosford's or to Mr. Bellamy's, but you must consider your wardrobe a little. You will remember that the last time on each occasion a dress was torn in pieces."

"But, mother, are not dresses intended to keep thorns from our legs; or, at any rate, isn't that *one* reason why we wear them?"

"Suppose it to be so, my dear, there is no reason why you should plunge about in thorns."

"No."

Catharine had a provoking way of saying "yes" or "no" when she wished to terminate a controversy. She stated her own opinion, and then, if objection was raised, at least by some people, her father and mother included, she professed agreement by a simple monosyllable, either because she was lazy, or because she saw that there was no chance of further profit in the discussion. It was irritating, because it was always clear she meant nothing. At this instant a servant opened the door, and Alice, a curly brown retriever, squeezed herself in, and made straight for Catharine, putting her head on Catharine's lap.

"Catharine, Catharine!" cried her mother, with a little scream, "she's dripping wet. Do pray, my child, think of the carpet."

But Catharine put her lips to Alice's face and kissed it deliberately, giving her a piece of cake.

"Mr. Gosford, my poor bitch has puppies—three of them—all as true as their mother, for we know the father."

"Ah!" replied Gosford, "you're lucky, then, Miss Catharine, for dogs, especially in a town——"

Mrs. Furze at this moment hastily rang the bell, making an unusual clatter with the crockery: Mr. Furze said the company must excuse him, and the three worthy farmers rose to take their departure.

CHAPTER II.

IT was Mr. Furze's custom on Sunday to go to sleep for an hour between dinner and tea upstairs in what was called the drawing-room, while Mrs. Furze sat and read, or said she read, a religious book. On hot summer afternoons Mr. Furze always took off his coat before he had his nap, and sometimes divested himself of his waistcoat. When the coat and waistcoat were taken off, Mrs. Furze invariably drew down the blinds. She had often remonstrated with her husband for appearing in his shirt-sleeves, and objected to the neighbours seeing him in this costume. There was a sofa in the room, but it was horsehair, with high ends both alike, not comfortable, which were covered with curious complications called anti-macassars, that slipped off directly they were touched, so that anybody who leaned upon them was engaged continually in warfare with them,

picking them up from the floor or spreading them out again. There was also an easy chair, but it was not easy, for it matched the sofa in horse-hair, and was so ingeniously contrived, that directly a person placed himself in it, it gently shot him forwards. Furthermore, it had special antimacassars, which were a work of art, and Mrs. Furze had warned Mr. Furze off them. "He would ruin them," she said, "if he put his head upon them." So a windsor chair with a high back was always carried by Mr. Furze upstairs after dinner, together with a common kitchen chair, and on these he slumbered. The room was never used, save on Sundays and when Mrs. Furze gave a tea-party. It overlooked the market-place, and, although on a Sunday afternoon the High Street was almost completely silent, Mrs. Furze liked to sit so near the window that she could peep out at the edge of the blind when she was not dozing. It is true no master nor mistress ever stirred at that hour, but every now and then a maidservant could be seen, and she was better than nothing for the purpose of criticism. A round table stood in the middle of the

room with a pink vase on it containing artificial flowers, and on the mantelpiece were two other pink vases and two great shells. Over the mantelpiece was a portrait of His Majesty King George the Fourth in his robes, and exactly opposite was a picture of the Virgin Mary, which was old and valuable. Mr. Furze bought it at a sale with some other things, and did not quite like it. It savoured of Popery, which he could not abide; but the parson one day saw it and told Mrs. Furze it was worth something; whereupon she put it in a new maple frame, and had it hung in a place of honour second to that occupied by King George, and so arranged that he and the Virgin were always looking at one another. On the other side of the room were a likeness of Mr. Eaton in hunting array, with the dogs, and a mezzotint of the Deluge.

Mr. Furze had just awaked on the Sunday afternoon following the day of which the history is partly given in the first chapter.

"My dear," said his wife, "I have been thinking a good deal of Catharine. She is not quite what I could wish."

"No," replied Mr. Furze, with a yawn.

"To begin with, she uses bad language. I was really quite shocked yesterday to hear the extremely vulgar word, almost—almost—I do not know what to call it—profane, I may say, which she applied to her dog when talking of it to Mr. Gosford. Then she goes in the foundry; and I firmly believe that all the money which has been spent on her music is utterly thrown away."

"The thing is—what is to be done?"

"Now, I have a plan."

In order to make Mrs. Furze's plan fully intelligible, it may be as well to explain that, up to the year 1840, the tradesmen of Eastthorpe had lived at their shops. But a year or two before that date some houses had been built at the north end of the town and called "The Terrace." A new doctor had taken one, the brewer another, and a third had been taken by the grocer, a man reputed to be very well off, who not only did a large retail business, but supplied the small shops in the villages round.

"Well, my dear, what is your plan?"

"Your connection is extending, and you want more room. Now, why should you not move to the Terrace? If we were to go there, Catharine would be withdrawn from the society in which she at present mixes. You could not continue to give market dinners, and gradually her acquaintance with the persons whom you now invite would cease. I believe, too, that if we were in the Terrace Mrs. Colston would call on us. As the wife of a brewer, she cannot do so now. Then there is just another thing which has been on my mind for a long time. It is settled that Mr. Jennings is to leave, for he has accepted an invitation from the cause at Ely. I do not think we shall like anybody after Mr. Jennings, and it would be a good opportunity for us to exchange the chapel for the church. We have attended the chapel regularly, but I have always felt a kind of prejudice there against us, or at least against myself, and there is no denying that the people who go to church are vastly more genteel, and so are the service and everything about it—the vespers—the bells—somehow there is a respectability in it."

Mr. Furze was silent. At last he said, "It is a very serious matter. I must consider it in all its bearings."

It *was* a serious matter, and he did consider it—but not in all its bearings, for he did nothing but think about it, so that it enveloped him, and he could not put himself at such a distance that he could see its real shape. He was now well over fifty, and was the kind of person with whom habits become firmly fixed. He was fixed even in his dress. He always wore a white neckcloth, and his shirt was frilled—fashions which were already beginning to die out in Eastthorpe. His manner of life was most regular: breakfast at eight, dinner at one, tea at five, supper at nine with a pipe afterwards, was his unvarying round. He never left Eastthorpe for a holiday, and read no books of any kind. He was a most respectable member of a Dissenting congregation, but he was not a member of the church, and was never seen at the week-night services or the prayer-meetings. He went through the ceremony of family worship morning and evening, but he did not pray extempore, as did

the elect, and contented himself with reading prayers from a book called "Family Devotions." The days were over for Eastthorpe when a man like Mr. Furze could be denounced, a man who paid his pew-rent regularly, and contributed to the missionary societies. The days were over when any expostulations could be addressed to him, or any attempts made to bring him within the fold, and Mr. Jennings therefore called on him, and religion was not mentioned. It may seem extraordinary that, without convictions based on any reasoning process, Mr. Furze's outward existence should have been so correct and so moral. He had passed through the usually stormy period of youth without censure. It is true he was married young, but before his marriage nobody had ever heard a syllable against him, and, after marriage, he never drank a drop too much, and never was guilty of a single dishonest action. Day after day passed by like all preceding days, in unbroken, level succession, without even the excitement of meeting-house emotion. Naturally, therefore, his wife's proposals made him un-

easy, and even alarmed him. He shrank from them unconsciously, and yet his aversion was perfectly wise; more so, perhaps, than any action for which he could have assigned a definite motive. With men like Mr. Furze the unconscious reason, which is partly a direction by past and forgotten experiences, and partly instinct, is often more to be trusted than any mental operation, strictly so-called. An attempt to use the mind actively on subjects which are too large, or with which it has not been accustomed to deal, is pretty nearly sure to mislead. He knew, or it knew, whatever we like to call it, that to break him from his surroundings meant that he himself was to be broken, for they were a part of him.

His wife attacked him again the next day. She was bent upon moving, and it is only fair to her to say that she did really wish to go for Catharine's sake. She loved the child in her own way, but she also wanted to go for many other reasons.

"Well, my dear, what have you to say to my little scheme?"

"How about my dinner and tea?"

"Come home to the Terrace. How far is it? Ten minutes' walk."

"An hour every day, in all weathers; and then there's the expense."

As to the expense, I am certain we should save in the long run, because you would not be expected to be continually asking people to meals."

"I am afraid that the business might suffer."

"Nonsense! In what way, my dear? Your attention will be more fixed upon it than it can be with the parlour always behind you."

There was something in that, and Mr. Furze was perplexed. He was not sufficiently well educated to know that something, and a great deal, too, can be said for anything, and he had not arrived at that callousness to argument which is the last result of culture.

"Yes, but I was thinking that perhaps if we leave off chapel and go to church some of our customers may not like it."

"Now, my good man, Furze, why you know you have as many customers who go to church as to chapel."

"Ah! but those who go to chapel may drop off."

"Why should they? We have plenty of customers who go to church. They don't leave us because we are Dissenters, and, as there are five times as many church people as Dissenters, your connection will be extended."

Mrs. Furze was unanswerable, but her poor husband, after all, was right. The change, when it took place, did not bring more people to the shop, and some left who were in the habit of coming. His dumb, dull presentiment was a prophecy, and his wife's logic was nothing but words.

"Then there are all the rooms here; what shall we do with them?"

"I have told you; you want more space. Besides, you do not make half enough show. You ought to go with the times. Why, at Cross's at Cambridge their upstairs windows are hung full of spades and hoes and such things, and you can see it is business up to the garret. I should turn the parlour into a counting-house. It isn't the proper thing for you to be standing always at that poky

little desk at the end of the counter with a pen behind your ear. Turn the parlour, I say, into a counting-house, and come out when Tom finds it necessary to call you. That makes a much better impression. The rooms above the drawing-room might be used for lighter goods, so as not to weight the floors too much."

Mr. Furze was not sentimental, but he shuddered. In the big front bedroom his father and he had been born. The first thing he could remember was having measles there, and watching day by day, when he was a little better, what went on in the street below. His brothers and sisters were also born there. He remembered how his mother was shut up there, and he was not allowed to enter; how, when he tried the door, Nurse Judkins came and said he must be a good boy and go away, and how he heard a little cry, and was told he had a new sister, and he wondered how she got in. In that room his father had died. He was very ill for a long time, and again Nurse Judkins came. He sat up with his father there night after night, and heard the church clock sound all the hours as the sick man lay waiting for his last. He

rallied towards the end, and, being very pious, he made his son sit down by the bedside and read to him the ninety-first Psalm. He then blessed his boy in that very room, and five minutes afterwards he had rushed from it, choked with sobbing when the last breath was drawn. He did not relish the thought of taking down the old four-post bedstead and putting rakes and shovels in its place, but all he could say was—

"I don't quite fall in with it."

"*Why* not? Now, my dear, I will make a bargain with you. If you can assign a good reason, I will give it up; but, if you cannot, then, of course, we ought to go, because *I* have plenty of reasons for going. Nothing can be fairer than that."

Mr. Furze was not quite clear about the "ought," although it was so fair, but he was mute, and, after a pause, went into his shop. An accident decided the question. Catharine was the lightest sleeper in the house, notwithstanding her youth. Two nights after this controversy she awoke suddenly and smelt something burning. She jumped out of bed, flung her dressing-gown over her, opened her door, and found the landing full of smoke. With-

out a moment's hesitation she rushed out and roused her parents. They were both bewildered, and hesitated, ejaculating all sorts of useless things. Catharine was impatient.

"Now, then, not a second; upstairs through Jane's bedroom, out into the gutter, and through Hopkins's attic. You cannot go downstairs."

Still there was trembling and indecision.

"But the tin box," gasped Mr. Furze; "it is in the wardrobe. I must take it."

Catharine replied by literally driving them before her. They picked up the maid-servant, crept behind the high parapet, and were soon in safety. By this time the smoke was pouring up thick and fast, although no flame had appeared. Suddenly Catharine cried—

"But where is Tom?"

Tom was the assistant, and slept in an offset at the back. Underneath him was the kitchen, and beyond was the lower offset of the scullery. Catharine darted towards the window.

"Catharine!" shrieked her mother, "where are you going? You cannot; you are not dressed."

But she answered not a word, and had vanished

before anybody could arrest her. The smoke was worse, and almost suffocating, but she wrapped her face and nose in her woollen gown, and reached Tom's door. He never slept with it fastened, and the amazed youth was awakened by a voice which he knew to be that of Miss Furze. Escape by the way she had come was hopeless. The staircase was now opaque. Fortunately Tom's casement, instead of being in the side wall, was at the end, and the drop to the scullery roof was not above four feet. Catharine reached it easily, and, Tom coming after her, helped her to scramble down into the yard. The gate was unbarred, and in another minute they were safe with their neighbours. The town was now stirring, and a fire-engine came, a machine which attended fires officially, and squirted on them officially, but was never known to do anything more, save to make the road sloppy. The thick, brick party walls of the houses adjoining saved them, but Mr. Furze's house was gutted from top to bottom. It was surrounded by a crowd the next day, which stared unceasingly. The fire-engine still operated on the ashes, and a great steam and smother arose.

A charred oak beam hung where it had always hung, but the roof had disappeared entirely, and the walls of the old bedchamber, which had seen so much of sweetness and of sadness, of the mysteries of love, birth, and death, lay bare to the sky and the street.

CHAPTER III.

THE stone bridge was deeply recessed, and in each recess was a stone seat. In the last recess but one, at the north end, and on the east side, there sat daily, some few years before 1840, a blind man, Michael Catchpole by name, selling shoelaces. He originally came out of Suffolk, but he had lived in Eastthorpe ever since he was a boy, and had worked for Mr. Furze's father. He was blinded by a splash of melted iron, and was suddenly left helpless, a widower with one boy, Tom, fifteen years old. His employer, the present Mr. Furze, did nothing for him, save sending him two bottles of lotion which he had heard were good for the eyes, and Mike for a time was confounded. His club helped him so long as he was actually suffering and confined to his house, but their pay did not last above six weeks. In these

six weeks Mike learned much. He was brought face to face with a blank wall with the pursuer behind him—an experience which teaches more than most books, and he was on the point of doing what some of us have been compelled to do—that is to say, to recognise that the worst is inevitable, throw up the arms and bravely yield. But Mike also learned that this is not always necessary to a man with courage, and that very often escape lies in the last moment, the very last, when endurance seems no longer possible. His deliverance did not burst upon him in rainbow colours out of the sky complete. It was a very slow affair. He heard that an old woman had died who lived in Parker's Alley and sold old clothes, old iron, bottles, and such like trash. Parker's Alley was not very easy to find. Going up High Street from the bridge, you first turned to the right through Cross Street, and then to the right again down Lock Lane, and out of Lock Lane ran the alley, a little narrow gutter of a place, dark and squalid, paved with round stones, through which slops of all kinds perpetually percolated, and gave forth on the cleanest days a faint and sickening odour. Mike

thought he could buy the stock for five shillings; the rent was only half a crown a week, and with the help of Tom, a remarkably sharp boy, who could tell him in what condition the goods were which were offered him for purchase, he hoped he could manage to make way. It was a dreadful trial. The old woman had lived amongst all her property. She had eaten and drunk and slept amidst the dirty rags of Eastthorpe, but Mike could not. Fortunately the cottage was at the end of the alley. One window looked out on it, but the door was in a kind of indentation in it round the corner. On the right-hand side of the door was the room looking into the alley, and this Mike made his shop; on the left was a little cupboard of a living-room. He kept the shop window open, so that no customer came through the doorway, and he begged some scarlet geranium cuttings, which, in due time, bloomed into brilliant colour on his sitting-room window-sill, proclaiming that from their possessor hope and delight in life had not departed. Alas! the enterprise was a failure. Mike was no hand at driving hard bargains, and frequently, when the Jew from Cambridge came

round to sweep up what Mike had been unable to sell in the town, he found himself the worse for his purchases. The unscalable wall was again in front of him, and his foe at his heels, closer than before, and raging for his blood. He had gone out one morning, Tom leading him, and was passing the bank, when the cashier ran out. Miss Foster, one of the maiden ladies, who it will be remembered, lived in the Abbey Close, had left a sovereign on the counter, and the cashier was exceedingly anxious to show his zeal by promptly returning it, for Miss Foster, it will also be remembered, was a daughter of a former partner in the bank, and still, as it was supposed, retained some interest in it. She had gone too far, however, and the cashier could not venture to leave his post and follow her. Knowing Mike and Tom perfectly well, he asked Mike to take the sovereign at once to the lady. He promptly obeyed, and was in time to restore it to its owner before it was missed. She was not particularly sensitive, but the sight of Mike and Tom standing at the hall entrance rather touched her, and she rewarded them with a shilling. She was also pleased to inquire how

Mike was getting on, and he briefly told her he did not get on in any way, save as the most unsuccessful happily get on, and so at last terminate their perplexities. Miss Foster, although well-to-do, kept neither footman nor page, and a thought struck her. She abhorred male servants, but it was very often inconvenient to send her maids on errands. She therefore suggested to Mike that, if he and Tom could station themselves within call, they would not only be useful, but earn something of a livelihood. The bank wanted an odd man occasionally, and she was sure that other people in the town would employ him. Accordingly Mike and Tom one morning established themselves in the recess of the bridge, after having given notice to everybody who would be likely to assist them, and Mike set up a stock of boot-laces and shoe-laces of all kinds. He thus managed to pick up a trifle. He wrapped sacking round his legs to keep off the cold as he sat, and had for a footstool a box with straw in it. He also rigged up a little awning on some sticks to keep off the sun and a shower, but of course when a storm came he was obliged to retreat. He was

then allowed a shelter in the bank. The dust was a nuisance, for it was difficult to predict its capricious eddies, but he learnt its laws at last, and how to choose his station so as to diminish annoyance. At first he was depressed at the thought of sitting still for so many hours with nothing to do, but he was not left to himself so much as he anticipated. Two hours on the average were spent on errands; then there was his dinner: Tom talked to him; people went by and said a word or two, and thus he discovered that a foreseen trouble may look impenetrable, but when we near it, or become immersed in it, it is often at least semi-transparent, and even sometimes admits a ray of sunshine. Gradually his employment became sweet to him; he was a part of the town; he heard all its news; it was gentle with him; even the rough boys never molested him; he tamed a black kitten to stay with him, and a red ribbon and a bell were provided for her by a friend. When the kitten grew to be a cat she gravely watched under Mike's awning during his short absences with Tom, and not a soul ever touched the property she guarded. Country folk

who came to market on Saturday invariably saluted Mike with their kind country friendliness, and brought him all sorts of little gifts in the shape of fruit, and even of something more substantial when a pig was killed. Thus with Mike time and the hour wore out the roughest day.

Two years had now passed since his accident, and Tom was about seventeen, when Miss Catharine crossed the bridge one fine Monday morning in June with the servant, and, as was her wont, stopped to have a word or two with her friend Mike. Mike was always at his best on Monday morning. Sunday was a day of rest, but he preferred Monday. It was a delight to him to hear again the carts and the noise of feet, and to feel that the world was alive once more. Sunday with its enforced quietude and inactivity was a burden to him.

"Well, Miss Catharine, how are you to-day?"

"How did you know I was Miss Catharine? I hadn't spoken."

"Lord, Miss, I could tell. Though it's only about two years since I lost my eyes, I could tell. I can make out people's footsteps. What

a lovely morning! What's going on now down below?"

Mike always took much interest in the wharves by the side of the river.

"Why, Barnes's big lighter is loading malt."

"Ah! what, the new one with the yellow band round it! that's a beautiful lighter, that is."

Mike had never seen it.

"What days do you dislike the most? Foggy, damp, dull, dark days?"

These foggy, damp, dull, dark days were particularly distasteful to Catharine.

"No, Miss, I can't say I do, for, you know, I don't see them."

"Cold, bitter days?"

"They are a bit bad; but somehow I earn more money on cold days than on any other; how it is I don't know."

"I hate the dust."

"Ah, now! that *is* unpleasant, but there again, Miss, I dodge it, and it's my belief that it wouldn't worry people half so much if they wouldn't look at it."

"How much have you earned this morning?"

"Not a penny yet, Miss, but it will come."

"I want two pairs of shoe-laces," and Miss Catharine, selecting two pairs, put down a four-penny-piece, part of her pocket-money, twice the market value of the laces, and tripped over the bridge. When she was at dinner with her father and mother that day she suddenly said—

"Father, didn't Mike Catchpole lose his sight in our foundry?"

"Yes."

"Have you been talking with him again?" interposed Mrs. Furze. "I wish you would not stop on the bridge as you do. It does not look nice for a girl like you to stay and gossip with Mike."

Catharine took no notice.

"Did you ever do anything for him?"

"What an odd question!" again interposed Mrs. Furze. "What should we do? There was his club: besides, we sent him the lotion."

"Why cannot you take Tom as an apprentice?"

"Because," said her father, "there is nobody to pay the premium; you know what that means. When a boy is bound apprentice the master has a sum of money for teaching him the business."

Catharine did not quite comprehend, inasmuch as there were two boys in the back shop who were paid wages, and who were learning their trade. She was quiet for a few minutes, but presently returned to the charge.

"You *must* take Tom. Why shouldn't you give him what you give the other boys?"

"Really, Catharine," said her mother, "why *must?*"

"Must!" cried the little miss—"yes, I say *must*, because Mike lost his eyes for you, and you've done nothing for him; it's a shame."

"Catharine, Catharine!" said her father, but in accordance with his usual habit he said nothing more, and the mother, also in accordance with her usual habit, collapsed.

Miss Catharine generally, even at that early age, carried all before her, much to her own detriment. Her parents unfortunately were perpetually making a brief show of resistance and afterwards yielding. Frequently they had no pretext for resistance, for Catharine was right and they were wrong. Consequently the child grew up accustomed to see everything bend to her own will,

and accustomed to believe that what she willed was in accordance with the will of the universe—not a healthy education, for the time is sure to come when a destiny which will not bend stands in the path before us, and we are convinced by the roughest processes that what we purpose is to a very small extent the purpose of Nature. The shock then is serious, especially if the collision be postponed till mature years. The parental opposition, such as it was, was worse than none, because it enabled her to feel her strength. She continued to press her point, and not only was victorious, but was empowered to tell Mike that his son would be taken into the foundry and paid five shillings and sixpence a week—"a most special case," as Mr. Furze told Mike, in order to stimulate his gratitude.

Mike was now able to find his way about by himself, but before the date of the first chapter in this history he had left the bridge, and Tom supported him.

The morning after the fire beheld the Furze family at breakfast with the hospitable Hopkins. They had saved scarcely any clothes, but Tom

and his master were equipped from a ready-made shop. The women had to remain indoors in borrowed garments till they could be made presentable by the dressmaker. Mr. Furze was so unfitted to deal with events which did not follow in anticipated, regular order, that he was bewildered. He and Tom went out to look at the ruins, and everything which had to be done seemed to crowd in upon him at once, one thing tumbling incessantly over the other, and nothing staying long enough before him to be settled. Although his business had been fairly large, he had nothing of the faculty of the captain or the manager, who can let details alone and occupy himself with principles. He had a stock of copper bolt-stave in the front shop, and he poked about and pestered the men to know if any of it could be found melted. Then it occurred to him the next instant, and before the inquiry about the bolt-stave could be answered, that he had lost his account-books, and he began to try to recollect what one of his principal customers owed him. Before his memory was fairly exercised on the subject it struck him that the men in the foundry—which was untouched—

would not know what to do, and he hurried in, but came out again without leaving any directions. At last he became so confused that he would have broken down if Tom had not come to the rescue, and gently laid hold of his arm.

"Let us go into the Bell;" and into the Bell they went, into the large, empty coffee-room, very quiet at that time of the morning. "We are better here," said Tom, "if we want to know what we ought to do. The first thing is to write to the insurance company."

"Of course, of course!"

"We will do that at once; I will write the letter, and you sign it."

In less than ten minutes this stage of the business was passed.

"The next thing is to find a shop while they are rebuilding."

That was not quite so easy a matter. There was not one in the High Street to be let. At last an idea struck Tom.

"There is the Moot Hall—underneath it, I mean. We shall have to buy fittings, but I will have them so arranged that they will do for the new

building. All that is necessary is to obtain leave; but we shall be sure to get it: only half of it is wanted on market days, and that's the part that isn't shut off. We'll then write to Birmingham and Sheffield about the stock. We'd better have a few posters stuck about at once, saying that business will be carried on in the Hall for the present."

Mr. Furze saw the complexity unravel itself, and the knot in his head began to loosen, but he did not quite like to reflect that he owed his relief to Tom, and that Tom had seen his agitation. Accordingly, when a proof of the poster was brought, he was the master, most particularly the master, and observed with much dignity and authority that it ought not to have been set up without the benefit of his revision; that it would not do by any means as it stood, and that it had better be left with him.

Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins insisted upon continuing their hospitality until a new home could be found, and Mrs. Furze urged her project of the Terrace with such eagerness, that at last her husband consented.

"I think," said Mrs. Furze, when the debate was concluded, "that Catharine had better go away for a short time until we are settled in the Terrace and the shop is rebuilt. She would not be of much use in the new house, and would only knock herself up."

That was not Mrs. Furze's reason. She had said nothing to Catharine, but she instinctively dreaded her hostility to the scheme. Mr. Furze knew that was not Mrs. Furze's reason, but he accepted it. Mrs. Furze knew it was not her own reason, but she also accepted it, and believed it to be the true reason. Such contradictions are quite possible in that mystery of mysteries, the human soul.

"My dear Catharine," quoth her mother that evening, "you look worried and done up. No wonder, considering what we have gone through. A change would do you good, and you had better go and stay with your aunt at Ely till we have a roof of our own over our heads once more. She will be delighted to see you."

Catharine particularly objected to her aunt at Ely. She was a maiden lady and elder sister to

Mrs. Furze. She had a small annuity, had turned herself into a most faithful churchwoman, and went to live at Ely because it was cheap and a cathedral city. Every day, morning and afternoon, was Aunt Matilda to be seen at the cathedral services, and frequently she was the only attendant, save the choir and officials.

"Why do you want me out of the way?" said Catharine, dismissing without the least notice the alleged pretext.

"I have told you, my dear."

"I cannot go to Ely. If you wish me to go anywhere, I will go to Mrs. Bellamy's."

"My dear, that is not a sufficient change for you. Ely is a different climate, and I cannot consent to quartering you on a stranger for so long."

"Mrs. Bellamy will not object. Will the new house be like the old one?"

"Well, really, my dear, nothing at present is quite determined; no doubt your father will take the opportunity of making a few improvements."

"My bedroom, I hope, will be what it was before, and in the same place."

"Oh, I—I trust there will be no serious

alteration, except what—what will be agreeable to us all, but your father is so much bothered now; perhaps you will have a room which is a little larger, but I really do not know. I cannot say anything; how can you *expect* me to say anything just at present, my dear child?"

Again there was the same contradiction. Mrs. Furze knew this was wrong, but she believed it was right. There was, however, a slight balance in favour of what she knew against what she believed, and she hastened to appease her conscience by a mental promise that, as soon as possible, she would tell Catharine that, upon full consideration, they had determined, &c., &c. That would put everything straight morally. Had Catharine put her question yesterday—so Mrs. Furze argued—the answer now given would have been perfectly right. She was doing nothing more than giving a reply which was a trifle in arrear of the facts, and, if she rectified it at the earliest date, the impropriety would be nothing. It is sometimes thought that it is those who habitually speak the truth who are most easily deceived. It is not quite so. If the deceivers are not entirely

deceived, they profess acquiescence, and perpetual acquiescence induces half-deception. It is, perhaps, more correct to say that the word deception has no particular meaning for them, and implies a standard which is altogether inapplicable. There is a tacit agreement through all society to say things which nobody believes, and that being the constitution under which we live, it is absurd to talk of truth or falsity in the strict sense of the terms. A thing is true when it is in accordance with the system and on a level with it, and false when it is below it. Every now and then at rarest intervals a creature is introduced to us who speaks the veritable reality and wakes in us the slumbering conviction of universal imposture. We know that he is not as other men are; we look into his eyes and see that they penetrate us through and through, but we cannot help ourselves, and we jabber to him as we jabber to the rest of the world. It was ridiculous that her mother should talk as she did to Catharine. Mrs. Furze was perfectly aware that she was not deluding her daughter; but she assumed that the delusion was complete.

"Well, mother, I say I cannot go to Ely."

Catharine again had her own way. She went to Mrs. Bellamy's, and Mrs. Furze, after having told Mrs. Bellamy what was going to happen, begged her not to say anything to Catharine about it.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. BELLAMY'S farm of Westchapel—Chapel Farm it was usually called—lay about half a mile from Lampson's Ford, and about five miles from Eastthorpe. The road from Eastthorpe running westerly and parallel with the river, at a distance of about a mile from it sends out at the fourth milestone a by-road to the south, which crosses the river by a stone bridge, and there is no doubt that before the bridge existed there was a ford, and that there was also a chapel hard by where people probably commended their souls to God before taking the water. In the angle formed by the main road, the lane, and the river, lay Chapel Farm. The house stood on a gentle slope, just enough to lift it above the range of the worst of winter floods, and faced the south. It was not in the

lane, but on a kind of private road or cart-track which issued from it; went through a gate and under a hedge; expanded itself in an open space of carefully weeded gravel just opposite the front door, and became a more insignificant and much rougher track on the other side, passing by the stacks into the field, and finally disappearing altogether. From the hand-post on the main road to the gate was half a mile, and from the gate to the farm nearly another half-mile. In driving from Chapel Farm you feel, when you reach the gate, you are in the busy world again, and when you reach the hand-post and turn to Eastthorpe you are in the full tide of life, although not a soul is to be seen. Opposite the house were the farm-buildings and the farm-yard. The gate to the right of the farm-buildings led into the meadow, and thus anybody sitting in the front rooms could see the barges slowly and silently towed from the sea to the uplands and back again, the rising ground beyond, and so on to Thingleby, whose little spire just emerged above the horizon. The river, deep and sluggish for the most part, was fringed

with willows on the side opposite the towing-path. At the bridge, just where the ford used to be, it was broken into shallows, over which the stream slipped faster, and here and there there were not above two or three feet of water, so that sometimes the barges were almost aground. The farmhouse was not quite ideal. It was plain red brick, now grey and lichen-covered, about a hundred years old; the windows were white-painted, with heavy frames, and the only attempt at ornament was a kind of porch over the front door, supported by brackets, but with no sides to it. Nevertheless, it had its charms. Save on the northern side, where it was backed by the huge elms in the home-field, it lay bare to the winds, breezy, airy, full of light. In summer the front door was always open, and even when it was shut in cold weather no knocker was ever used. If a visitor came by daylight he was always seen, and if after dark he was heard. The garden, which lay on the west side of the house and at the back, was rather warm in hot weather, but was delicious. Under the wall on the north side the apricot and Orleans plum

ripened well, and round to the right was the dairy, always cool, sweet, and clean, with the big elder trees before the barred window.

The mistress of the house, Mrs. Bellamy, was not a very robust woman. She was generally ailing, but never very seriously ill. She had had two children, but they had both died. Mrs. Bellamy's mind, unoccupied with parental cares, with politics, or with literature, let itself loose upon her house, her dairy, and her fowls. She established a series of precautions to prevent dirt, and the precautions themselves became objects to be protected. There was a rough scraper intervening on behalf of the black-leaded scraper; there was a large mat to preserve the mat beyond it; and although a drugget covered the stair carpet, Mrs. Bellamy would have been sorely vexed if she had found a footmark upon it. If a friend was expected she put some straw outside the garden gate, and she asked him in gentle tones when he dismounted if he would kindly "just take the worst off" there. The kitchen was scoured and scrubbed till it was fleckless. It was theoretically the living-room,

and a defence for the parlour, but it also was defended in its turn like the scraper, and the back kitchen, which had a fireplace, was used for cooking, the fire in the state kitchen not being lighted in summer time. Partly Mrs. Bellamy's excessive neatness was due to the need of an occupation. She brooded much, and the moment she had nothing to do she became low-spirited and unwell. Partly also it was due to a touch of poetry. She polished her verses in beeswax and turpentine, and sought on her floors and tables for that which the poet seeks in Eden or Atlantis. It must not be imagined that because she was so particular she was stingy. She was one of the most open-handed creatures that ever breathed. She loved plenty. The jug was always full to overflowing with beer, and the dishes were always heaped up with good things, so that nobody was ever afraid of robbing his neighbour.

Catharine was never weary of Chapel Farm. She was busy from morning to night, and the living creatures on it were her especial delight Naturally, as is the case with all country girls

the circumference of her knowledge embraced a region which a town matron would have veiled from her daughters with the heaviest curtains.

"How's the foal going on?" said Mrs. Bellamy to her husband one evening when he came in to supper.

"Oh, the foal's all right; he'll be just like his father—just the same broad hind-quarters. Lord! we shall hardly get him into the shafts. You remember, Miss Catharine, as I showed you what extrornary quarters King Tom had when he came here? It is a curious thing, there ain't one of his foals that hasn't got that mark of him. I allus likes a horse, I do, that leaves his mark strong. If you pay pretty heavy you ought to have something for your money. The mother, though, is in a bad way: my belief is she'll have milk-fever."

"That mare never seemed healthy to me," said Catharine.

"No, she was brought up anyhow. When she was about a fortnight old her mother died. They didn't know how to manage her, and half starved her."

"I don't believe in starvin' creatures when they are young," said Mrs. Bellamy, who was herself a very small eater.

"Nor I neither, and yet that mare, although, as you say, Miss Catharine, she was never healthy, has the most wonderful pluck, as you know. I remember once I had two ton o' muck in the waggon, and we were stuck. Jack and Blossom couldn't stir it, and, after a bit, chucked up. I put in Maggie—you should have seen her! She moved it, a'most all herself, aye, as far as from here to the gate, and then of course the others took it up. That's blood! What a thing blood is!—you may load it, but you can't break it. Never a touch of the whip would she stand, and yet it's quite true she isn't right, and never was. Maybe the foal will be like her; the shape goes after the father mostly, but the sperrit and temper after the mother."

The next morning Maggie was worse. Catharine was in the stable as soon as anybody was stirring, and the poor creature was trembling violently. She was watched with the most tender care, and when she became too weak to stand to eat or

drink she was slung with soft bands and pads. Her groans were dreadful. After about a week of cruel misery she died. It was evening, and Catharine sat down and looked at what was left of her friend. She had never before even partly realised what death meant. She was too young to feel its full force. The time was yet to come when death would mean despair—when the insolubility of the problem would induce carelessness to all other problems and their solution. Furthermore, this was only a horse. Still, the contrast struck her between the corpse before her and Maggie with her bright eyes and vivid force. What had become of all that strength; what had become of *her?*—and the girl mused, as countless generations had mused before her. Then there was the pathos of it. She thought of the brave animal which she had so often seen, apparently for the mere love of difficulty, struggling as if its sinews would crack. She thought of its glad recognition when she came into the stable, and of its evident affection, half human, or perhaps wholly human, and imprisoned in a form which did not permit full expression.

She looked at its body as it lay there extended, quiet, pleading as it were against the doom of man and of beast, and tears came to her eyes as she noted the appeal—tears not altogether of sorrow, but partly of revolt.

Mr. Bellamy came in.

"Ah, Miss Catharine, I don't wonder at it. There's many a human as I should less have missed than Maggie. I can't make out at times why we should love the beasts so as perish."

"Perhaps they don't."

"Really, Miss, of course they do. What's the Lord to do with all the dead horses and cows?"

Catharine thought, "Or with the dead men and women," but she said nothing. The subject was new to her. She took her scissors and cut off a wisp of Maggie's beautiful mane, twisted it up, put it carefully in a piece of paper, and placed it in a little pocket-book which she always carried The next morning as soon as it was daylight a man came over from Eastthorpe; Maggie was hoisted into a cart, her legs dangling down outside, and was driven away to be converted into food for dogs.

One of Catharine's favourite haunts was a meadow by the bridge. She was not given to reading, but she liked a stroll; and, as there were plenty of rats, the dog enjoyed the stroll too. Not a week after Maggie's death she had wandered to this point without her usual companion. A barge had gone down just before she arrived, and for some reason or other had made fast to the bank about a quarter of a mile below her on the side opposite to the towing-path. She sat down under a willow with her face to the water and back to the sun, for it was very hot, and in a few minutes she was half dozing. Suddenly she started, and one of the bargemen stood close by her."

"Hullo, my beauty! Why you was asleep! Wot's the time?"

"I haven't a watch."

"Haven't a watch! Now that's a shame; if you was mine, my love, you should 'ave one o' gold."

"It is time I was at home," said Catharine, rising with as much presence of mind as she could muster; "and I should think it must be your dinner-hour."

"Damn my dinner-hour, when I've got the chance of sittin' alongside a gal with sich eyes as yourn, my beauty. Why, you make me all of a tremble. Sit down for a bit."

Catharine moved away, but the bargee caught her round the waist.

"Sit down, I tell yer, jist for a minute. Who's a-goin' to hurt yer?"

It was of no use to resist, and she did not scream. She sat down, and his arm relaxed its hold to pick up his pipe which had fallen on the other side. Instantly, without a second's hesitation, she leaped up, and, before his heavy bulk could lift itself, she had turned and rushed along the bank. Had she made for the bridge, he would have overtaken her in the lane, but she went the other way. About fifty yards down the stream, and in the direction of Chapel Farm, was a deep hole in the river bed, about five feet wide. On the other side of it there were not more than eighteen inches of water at any point. Catharine knew that hole well, as the haunt of the jack and the perch. She reached it, cleared it at a bound, and alighted on the bit of shingle just beyond it. Her pursuer

came up and stared at her silently, with his mouth half open. Just at that moment the distant sound of wheels was heard, and he slowly sauntered back to his barge. Catharine boldly waded over the intervening shallows, and was across just as the cart reached the top of the bridge, but her shoes remained behind her in the mud. It proved to be her father's cart, and to contain Tom, who had been over to Thingleby that morning to see what chance there was of getting any money out of a blacksmith who was largely in Mr. Furze's debt. He saw there was something wrong and dismounted.

"Why, Miss Catharine, you are all wet! What is the matter?"

"I slipped down."

She could not tell the truth, although usually so straightforward. Tom looked at her inquiringly as if he was not quite sure, but there was something in her face which forbade further investigation.

"You've lost your shoes; you cannot walk home; will you let me give you a lift to Chapel Farm?"

"They do not matter a straw: it is grass nearly the whole way."

"I'll fish them out, if you will show me where they are."

"Carried down by this time ever so far."

"But you will hurt your feet; it isn't all grass; you had better get in."

She thought suddenly of the bargee again, and reflected that the barge might still be moored where it was an hour ago.

"Very well, then, I will go."

She essayed to put her foot upon the step, but the mud on her stocking was greasy, and she fell backwards. Tom caught her in his arms, and a strange thrill passed through him when he felt that the whole weight of her body rested on him. Many a man there is who can call to mind, across forty years, a silly passage like this in his life. His hair has whitened; all passion ought long ago to have died out of him; thousands of events of infinitely greater consequence have happened; he has read much in philosophy and religion, and has forgotten it all, and a slip on the ice when skating together, or a stumble on

the stair, or the pressure of a hand prolonged just for a second in parting, is felt with its original intensity, and the thought of it drives warm blood once more through the arteries.

"Let me get in first," said Tom, putting some straw on the step.

He got into the cart, and he gently pulled her up, relinquishing her very carefully, and, in fact, not until after his assistance was no longer needed.

"How *did* you manage it?"

"You know how these things happen: it was all over in a minute: how are father and mother?"

"They are very well."

There was a pause for a minute or two.

"Well, how are things going on at Eastthorpe?"

"Oh, pretty well; the building is three parts done. I don't think, Miss Catharine, you'll ever go back to the old spot again."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't think your father and mother will leave the Terrace."

"Very likely," she replied, decisively. "It will

be better, perhaps, that they should not. I am sure that whatever they do will be quite right."

"Of course, Miss Catharine, but *I* shall be sorry. I wish my bedroom could have been built up again between the old walls. In that bedroom you saved my life."

"Rubbish! Even suppose *I* had done it, as you say, I should have done just the same for my silk-worms, and then, somehow when I do a thing on a sudden like that, I always feel as if *I* had not done it. I am sure I didn't do it."

The last few words were spoken in a strangely different tone, much softer and sweeter.

"I don't quite understand."

"I mean," said Catharine, speaking slowly, as if half surprised at what had occurred to her, and half lost in looking at it—"I mean that I do not a bit reflect at such times upon what I do. It is as if something or somebody took hold of me, and, before I know where I am, the thing is done, and yet there is no something nor somebody—at least, so far as I can see. It is wonderful, for after all it is I who do it."

Tom looked intently at her. She seemed to be

taking no notice of him and to be talking to herself. He had never seen her in that mood before, although he had often seen her abstracted and heedless of what was passing. In a few moments she recovered herself, and the usual every-day accent returned with an added hardness.

"Here we are at Chapel Farm. Mind you say nothing to father or mother; it will only frighten them."

Mrs. Bellamy came to the gate.

"Lor', bless the child! wherever have you been?"

"Slipped into the water and left my shoes behind me, that's all;" and she ran indoors, jumping from mat to mat, and without even so much as bidding Tom good-bye, who rode home, not thinking much about his business, but lost in a muddle of most contradictory presentations, a constant glimmer of Catharine's ankles, wonderment at her accident—was it all true?—the strange look when she disclaimed the honour of his rescue and expounded her philosophy, and the fall between his shoulders. When he slept, his sleep was usually dreamless, but that night

he dreamed as he hardly ever dreamed before. He perpetually saw the foot on the step, and she was slipping into his arms continually, until he awoke with the sun.

CHAPTER V.

CATHARINE went home, or rather to the Terrace, soon afterwards, and found that there was no intention of removing to the High Street, although, notwithstanding their three months' probation in the realms of respectability, Mrs. Colston had not called, and Mrs. Furze was beginning to despair. The separation from the chapel was nearly complete. It had been done by degrees. On wet days Mrs. Furze went to church because it was a little nearer, and Mr. Furze went to chapel; then Mrs. Furze went on fine days, and, after a little interval, Mr. Furze went on a fine day. A fund had been set going to "restore" the church: the heavy roof was to be removed, and a much lighter and handsomer roof covered with slate was to be substituted; the stonework of many of the windows, which the

rector declared had begun to show "signs of incipient decay," was to be cut out and replaced with new, so as to make, to use the builder's words, "a good job of it," and a memorial window was to be put in near the great west window with its stained glass, the Honourable Mr. Eaton having determined upon this mode of commemorating the services of his nephew, Lieutenant Eaton, who had died of dysentery in India, brought on by inattention to tropical rules of eating and drinking, particularly the latter. Oliver Cromwell, it was said, had stabled his horses in the church. This, however, is doubtful, for the quantity of stable accommodation he must have required throughout the country, to judge from vergers and guide-books, must have been much larger than his armies would have needed, if they had been entirely composed of cavalry; and the evidence is not strong that his horses were so ubiquitous. It was further affirmed that, during the Cromwellian occupation, the west window was mutilated; but there was also a tradition that, in the days of George the Third, there were complaints of dinginess and want of light, and that part of the

stained glass was removed and sold. Anyhow, there was stained glass in the Honourable Mr. Eaton's mansion wonderfully like that at Eastthorpe. It was now proposed to put new stained glass in the defective lights. Some of the more advanced of the parishioners, including the parson and the builder, thought the old glass had better all come out, "the only way to make a good job of it"; but at an archidiaconal visitation the archdeacon protested, and he was allowed to have his own way. Then there was the warming, and this was a great difficulty, because no natural exit for the pipe could be found. At last it was settled to have three stoves, one at the west end of the nave, and one in each transept. With regard to the one in the nave there was no help for it but to bore a hole through the wall. The builder undertook "to give the pipe outside a touch of the Gothic, so that it wouldn't look bad," and as for the other stoves, there were two windows just handy. By cutting out the head of Matthew in one, and that of Mark in another, the thing was done, and, as Mrs. Colston observed, "the general confused effect remained the same." There were

one or two other improvements, such as pointing all over outside, also strongly recommended by the builder, and the shifting some of the tombs, and repairing the tracery, so that altogether the sum to be raised was considerable. Mrs. Colston was one of the collectors, and Mrs. Furze called on her after two months' residence in the Terrace, and intimated her wish to subscribe. Mrs. Colston took the money very affably, but still she did not return the visit.

Meanwhile Mrs. Furze was doing everything she could to make herself genteel. The Terrace contained about a dozen houses; the two in the centre were higher than the rest, and above them, flanked by a large scroll at either end, were the words, "THE TERRACE," moulded out of the stucco; up to each door was a flight of stone steps; before each front window on the dining-room floor and the floor above was a balcony protected by cast-iron filigree work, and between each house and the road was a little piece of garden surrounded by a dwarf wall and arrow-head railings. Mrs. Furze's old furniture had, nearly all, been discarded or sold, and two new carpets had

been bought. The one in the dining-room was yellow and chocolate, and the one upstairs in the drawing-room was a lovely rose-pattern, with large full-blown roses nine inches in diameter in blue vases. The heavy chairs had disappeared, and nice light elegant chairs were bought, insufficient, however, for heavy weights, for one of Mrs. Furze's affluent customers being brought to the Terrace as a special mark of respect, and sitting down with a flop, as was his wont, smashed the work of art like card-board and went down on the floor with a curse, vowing inwardly never again to set foot in Furze's Folly, as he called it. The pictures, too, were all renewed. The "Virgin Mary" and "George the Fourth" went upstairs to the spare bedroom, and some new oleographs, "a rising art," Mrs. Furze was assured, took their places. They had very large margins, gilt frames, and professed to represent sunsets, sunrises, and full moons, at Tintern, Como, and other places not named, which Mrs. Furze, in answer to inquiries, always called "the Continent."

Mr. Furze had had a longish walk one morning, and was rather tired. When he came home to

dinner he found the house upset by one of its periodical cleanings, and consequently dinner was served upstairs, and not in the half-underground breakfast-room, as it was called, which was the real living-room of the family. Mr. Furze, being late and weary, prolonged his stay at home till nearly four o'clock, and, notwithstanding a rebuke from Mrs. Furze, insisted on smoking his pipe in the dining-room. Presently he took off his coat and put his feet on a chair, Sunday fashion.

"My dear," said his wife, "I don't want to interfere with your comfort, but don't you think you might give up that practice of sitting in your shirt-sleeves now we have moved?"

"Why because we've moved?" interposed Catharine.

"Catharine, I did not address you; you have no tact, you do not understand."

"Coat doesn't smell so much of smoke," replied Mr. Furze, giving, of course, any reason but the true reason.

"My dear, if that is the reason, put on another coat, or, better still, buy a proper coat and a smoking-cap. Nothing could be more appro-

priate than some of those caps we saw at the restoration bazaar."

"Really, mother, would you like to see father in a velvet jacket and one of those red-tasselled things on his head? I prefer the shirt-sleeves."

"No doubt you do; you are a Furze, every inch of you."

There is no saying to what a height the quarrel would have risen if a double knock had not been heard. A charwoman was in the passage with a pail of water and answered the door at once, before she could be cautioned. In an instant she appeared, apron tucked up.

"Mrs. Colston, mum," and in Mrs. Colston walked.

Mrs. Furze made a dash at her husband's clay pipe, forgetting that its destruction would not make matters better; but she only succeeded in upsetting the chair on which his legs rested, and in the confusion he slipped to the ground.

"Oh, Mrs. Colston, I am so sorry you have taken us by surprise; our house is being cleaned; pray walk upstairs—but oh dear, now I recollect,

the drawing-room is also turned out; what *will* you do, and the smell of the smoke, too!"

"Pray do not disconcert yourself," replied the brewer's wife, patronisingly; "I do not mind the smoke, at least for a few minutes."

Mrs. Colston herself had objected strongly to calling on Mrs. Furze, but Mr. Colston had urged it as a matter of policy, with a view to Mr. Furze's contributions to Church revenues.

"I have come purely on a matter of business, Mrs. Furze, and will not detain you."

Mr. Furze had retreated into a dark corner, and was putting on his waistcoat with his back to his distinguished guest. Catharine sat at the window quite immovable. Suddenly Mrs. Furze bethought herself she ought to introduce her husband and daughter.

"My husband and daughter, Mrs. Colston."

Mr. Furze turned half round, put his other arm into his waistcoat, and bowed. He had, of course, spoken to her scores of times in his shop, but he was not supposed to have seen her till that minute. Catharine rose, bowed, and sat down again.

"Take a chair, Mrs. Colston, take a chair," said

Mr. Furze, although he had again turned towards the curtain, and was struggling with his coat. Mrs. Furze, annoyed that her husband had anticipated her, pulled the easy-chair forward.

"I am afraid I deprived you of your seat," said the lady, alluding, as Mrs. Furze had not the slightest doubt, to his tumble.

"Not a bit, ma'am, not a bit," and he moved towards Catharine, feeling very uncomfortable, and not knowing what to do with his hands and legs.

"We are so much obliged to you, Mrs. Furze, for your subscription to the restoration fund. We find that a new pulpit is much required; the old pulpit, you will remember, is much decayed in parts, and will be out of harmony with the building when it is renovated. Young Mr. Cawston, who is being trained as an architect—the builder's son, you know—has prepared a design which is charming, and the ladies wish to make the new pulpit a present solely from themselves." The smoke got into Mrs. Colston's throat, and she coughed. "We want you, therefore, to help us."

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Then how much shall I say? Five pounds?"

"Would you allow me just to look at the subscription list?" interposed Mr. Furze, humbly; but before it could be handed to him Mrs. Furze had settled the matter.

"Five pounds—oh, yes, certainly, Mrs. Colston. Mr. Cawston is, I believe, a young man of talent?"

"Undoubtedly, and he deserves encouragement. It must be most gratifying to his father to see his son endeavouring to raise himself from a comparatively humble occupation and surroundings into something demanding ability and education, from a mere trade into a profession."

Catharine shifted uneasily, raised her eyes, and looked straight at Mrs. Colston, but said nothing.

Meanwhile Mr. Furze was perusing the list with both elbows on his knees. The difficulty with his hands and legs increased. He was conscious to a most remarkable degree that he had them, and yet they seemed quite foreign members of his body which he could not control.

"Well, ma'am, I think I must be going. I'll bid you good-bye."

"I have finished my errand, Mr. Furze, and I must be going too."

"Oh, pray, do not go yet," said Mrs. Furze, hoping, in the absence of her husband, to establish some further intimacy. Mr. Furze shook Mrs. Colston's hand with its lemon-coloured glove and departed. Catharine noticed that Mrs. Colston looked at the glove—for the ironmonger had left a mark on it—and that she wiped it with her pocket-handkerchief.

"I wish to ask," said Mrs. Furze, in her mad anxiety to secure Mrs. Colston, "if you do not think a new altar-cloth would be acceptable. I should be so happy—I will not say to give one myself, but to undertake the responsibility, and to contribute my share. The old altar-cloth will look rather out of place."

"Thank you, Mrs. Furze; I am sure I can answer at once. It will be most acceptable. You will not, I presume, object to adopting the design of the committee? We will send you a correct pattern. We have thought about the matter for some time, but had at last determined to wait indefinitely on the ground of the expense."

The expense! Poor Mrs. Furze had made her proposal on the spur of the moment. She, in her ignorance, had not thought an altar-cloth a very costly affair, and now she remembered that she had no friends who were not Dissenters. Moreover, to be on the committee was the object of her ambition, and it was clear that not only had nobody thought of putting her on it, but that she was to pay and take its directions.

"I believe," continued Mrs. Colston, "that the altar-cloth which we had provisionally adopted can be had in London for £20."

A ring at the front bell during this interesting conversation had not been noticed. The charwoman, still busy with broom and pail outside, knocked at the door with a knock which might have been given with the broom-handle and announced another visitor.

"Mrs. Bellamy, mum."

Catharine leaped up, rushed to meet her friend, caught her round the neck, and kissed her eagerly.

"Well, Miss Catharine, glad to see you looking so well; still kept the colour of Chapel Farm.

This is the first time I've seen you in your new house, Mrs. Furze. I had to come over to Eastthorpe along with Bellamy, and I said I *must* go and see my Catharine, though—and her mother—though they *do* live in the Terrace, but I couldn't get Bellamy to come—no, he said the Terrace warn't for him; he'd go and smoke a pipe and have something to drink at your old shop, or rather your new shop, but it's in the old place in the High Street—leastways if you keep any baccy and whiskey there now—and he'd call for me with the gig, and I said as I knew my Catharine—her mother—would give me a cup of tea; and, Miss Catharine, you remember that big white hog as you used to look at always when you went out into the meadow?—well, he's killed, and I know Mr. Furze likes a bit of good, honest, country pork—none of your nasty town-fed stuff—you never know what hogs eat in towns—so Bellamy has a leg about fourteen pounds in the gig, but I thought I'd bring you about two or three pounds of the sausages myself in my basket here," and Mrs. Bellamy pointed to a basket she had on her arm. She paused and became aware that there

was a stranger sitting near the fireplace. "But you've got a visitor here; p'r'aps I shall be in the way."

"In the way!" said Catharine. "Never, never; give me your basket and your bonnet; or stay, Mrs. Bellamy, I will go upstairs with you, and you shall take off your things."

And so, before Mrs. Furze had spoken a syllable, Catharine and Mrs. Bellamy marched out of the room.

"Who is that—that person?" said Mrs. Colston. "I fancy I have seen her before. She seems on intimate terms with your daughter."

"She is a farmer's wife, of humble origin, at whose house my daughter — lodged — for the benefit of her health."

"I must bid you good-day, Mrs. Furze. If you will kindly send a cheque for the five pounds to me, the receipt shall be returned to you in due course, and the drawing of the altar-cloth shall follow. I can assure you of the committee's thanks."

Mrs. Furze recollected she ought to ring the bell, but she also recollected the servant could

not appear in proper costume. Accordingly she opened the dining-room door herself.

"Let me move that ere pail, mum, or you'll tumble over it," said the charwoman to Mrs. Colston, "and p'r'aps you won't mind steppin' on this side of the passage, 'cause that side's all wet. 'Ere, Mrs. Furze, don't you come no further, I'll open the front door;" and this she did.

Mrs. Furze felt rather unwell, and went to her bedroom, where she sat down, and, putting her face on the bedclothes, gave way to a long fit of hysterical sobbing. She would not come down to tea, and excused herself on the ground of sickness. Catharine went up to her mother and inquired what was the matter, but was repulsed.

"Nothing is the matter—at least, nothing you can understand. I am very unwell; I am better alone; go down to Mrs. Bellamy."

"But, mother, it will do you good to be downstairs. Mrs. Bellamy will be so glad to see you, and she was so kind to me; it will be odd if you don't come."

"Go *away*, I tell you; I am best by myself; I can endure in solitude; you cannot comprehend

these nervous attacks, happily for you ; go *away*, and enjoy yourself with Mrs. Bellamy and your sausages."

Catharine had had some experience of these nervous attacks, and left her mother to herself. Mrs. Bellamy and Catharine consequently had tea alone, Mr. Furze remaining at his shop that afternoon, as he had been late in arrival.

"Sorry mother's so poorly, Catharine. Well, how do you like the Terrace?"

"I hate it. I detest every atom of the filthy, stuck-up, stuccoed hovel. I hate——" Catharine was very excited, and it is not easy to tell what she might have said if Mrs. Bellamy had not interrupted her.

"Now, Miss Catharine, don't say that ; it's a bad thing to hate what we must put up with. You never heard, did you, as Bellamy had a sister a good bit older than myself? She *was* a tartar, and no mistake. She lived with Bellamy and kept house for him, and when we married, Bellamy said she must stay with us. She used to put on him as you never saw, but he, somehow, seemed never to mind it ; some men don't feel such things,

and some do, but most on 'em don't when it's a woman, but I think a woman's worse. Well, what was I saying?—she put on me just in the same way and come between me and the servant-girl and the men, and when I told them to go and do one thing, went and told them to do another, and I was young, and I thought when I was married I was going to be mistress, and she called me 'a chit' to her brother, and I mind one day I went upstairs and fell on my knees and cried till I thought my heart would break, and I said, 'O my God, when will it please Thee to take that woman to Thyself!' Now to wish anybody dead is bad enough, but to ask the Lord to take 'em is awful; but then it was so hard to bear 'cause I couldn't say nothing about it, and I'm one of them as can't keep myself bottled up like ginger-beer. You don't remember old Jacob? He had been at Chapel Farm in Bellamy's father's time, and always looked on Bellamy as his boy, and used to be very free with him, notwithstanding he was the best creature as ever lived. He took a liking to me, and I needn't say that, liking of me, he didn't like Bellamy's sister. Well, I came

down, and I went out of doors to get a bit of fresh air—for I'm always better out of doors—and I went up by the cart-shed, and being faint a bit, sat down on the waggon shafts. Old Jacob, he came by; I can see him now; it was just about Michaelmas time, a-getting dark after tea, though I hadn't had any, and he said to me, 'Hullo, missus, what are you here for? and you've been a-cryin',' for I had my face toward the sky and was looking at it. I never spoke. 'I know what's the matter with you,' says he; 'do you think I don't? Now if you go on chafing of yourself, you'll worrit yourself into your grave, that's all. Last week there was something the matter with that there dog, and she howled night after night, and I never slept a wink. The first morning after she'd been a-yelping I was in a temper, and had half a mind to kill her. I felt as if she'd got a spite against me; but it come to me as she'd got no spite against *me*, and then all my worriting went away. I don't say as I slept much till she was better, but I didn't *worrit*. Now Bellamy's sister don't mean nothing against you. That's the way God-a-mighty made her.' I've

never forgot what Jacob said, and I know it made a difference, but the Lord took her not long afterwards."

"But I don't see what that has to do with me. It isn't the same thing."

"Yes, that's just what Bellamy says. He says I always go on with anything that comes into my head; but then it has nothing to do with anything he is saying, and maybe that's true, for one thing seems always to draw me on to another, and so I go round like, and I don't know myself where I am when I've finished. A little more tea, my dear, if you please. And yet," continued Mrs. Bellamy, when she had finished half of her third cup, "what I meant to say really has to do with you. It's all the same. You wouldn't hate the Terrace so much if you knew that nobody meant to spite you, as Jacob said. Suppose your father was driven to the Terrace and couldn't help it, and there wasn't another house for him, you wouldn't hate it so much then. It isn't the Terrace altogether. Now, Miss Catharine, you won't mind my speaking out to you. You know you are my girl," and Mrs. Bellamy turned and kissed her;

"you mustn't, you really mustn't. I've seen what was coming for a long time. Your mother and you ain't alike, but you mustn't rebel. I'm a silly old fool, and I know I haven't got a head, and what is in it is all mixed up somehow, but you'll be ever so much better if you leave your mother out of it, and don't, as I've told you before, go on dreaming she came here because you didn't want to come, or that she set herself up on purpose against you. And then you can always run over to Chapel Farm just whenever you like, my pet, and there's your own room always waiting for you."

An hour afterwards, when Mrs. Bellamy had left, Mr. Furze came home. Mrs. Furze was still upstairs, but consented to be coaxed down to supper. She passed the drawing-room ; the door was wide open, and she reflected bitterly upon the new carpet, the oleographs, and the schemes erected thereon. To think on what she had spent and what she had done, and then that Mrs. Colston should be received by a charwoman with a pail, should be shown into the room downstairs, and find it like a public-house bar! If Mr. Furze had

been there alone it would not so much have mattered, but the presence of wife and daughter sanctioned the vulgarity, not to say indecency. Mrs. Colston would naturally conclude they were accustomed to that sort of thing—that the pipe, Mrs. Bellamy and the sausages, the absence of Mr. Furze's coat and waistcoat, were the "atmosphere," as Mrs. Furze put it, in which they lived.

"That's right; glad to see you are able to come down," said Mr. Furze.

"I must say that Catharine is partly the cause of my suffering. When Mrs. Colston called here Catharine sat like a statue and said not a word, but when her friend Mrs. Bellamy came she precipitated herself—yes, I say precipitated herself—into her arms. I've nothing to say against Mrs. Bellamy, but Catharine knows perfectly well that Mrs. Colston's intimacy is desired, and *that's* the way she chose to behave. Mrs. Bellamy was the last person I should have wished to see here this afternoon; an uneducated woman, a woman whom we could not pretend to know if we moved in Mrs. Colston's circle; and what we have done was all

done for my child's benefit. She, I presume, would prefer decent society to that of peasants."

Catharine stopped eating.

"Mrs. Bellamy was the last person *I* should have wished to see here."

"I don't know quite what you mean, but it is probably something disobedient and cruel," and Mrs. Furze became slightly hysterical again.

Catharine made no offer of any sympathy, but, leaving her supper unfinished, rose without saying good-night, and appeared no more that evening.

CHAPTER VI.

"MY dear," said Mrs. Furze to her husband the next night when they were alone, "I think Catharine would be much better if she were sent away from home for a time. Her education is very imperfect, and there are establishments where young ladies are taken at her age and finished. It would do her a world of good."

Mr. Furze was not quite sure about the finishing. It savoured of a region outside the modest enclosure within which he was born and brought up.

"The expense, I am afraid, will be great, and I cannot afford it just now. There is no denying that business is no better; in fact, it is not so good as it was, notwithstanding the alterations."

"You cannot expect it to recover at once. Something must be done to put Catharine on a level with the young women in her position,

and my notion is that everything which will help to introduce us into society will help you. Why does Mrs. Butcher go out so much? It is because she knows it is a good investment."

"An ironmonger is not a doctor."

"Who said he was?" replied Mrs. Furze, triumphant in the consciousness of mental superiority. "Furze," she once said to him, when it was proposed to elect him a guardian of the poor, "take my advice and refuse. Your *forte* is not argument: you will never hold your own in debate."

"I know an ironmonger is not a doctor," she continued; "*I* of all people have reason to know it; but what I do say is, that the more we mix with superior people, the more likely you are to succeed, and that if you bury yourself in these days you will fail."

The italicised "I" was an allusion to a fiction that once Mrs. Furze might have married a doctor if she had liked, and thereby have secured the pre-eminence which the wife of a drug-dispenser assumes in a country town. The grades in Eastthorpe were very marked, and no caste

distinctions could have been more rigid. The county folk near were by themselves. They associated with none of the townsfolk, save with the rector, and even in that relationship there was a slight tinge of ex-officiosity. Next to the rector were the lawyer and the banker and the two maiden banker ladies in the Abbey Close. Looked at from a distance these might be supposed to stand level, but, on nearer approach, a difference was discernible. The banker and the ladies, although they visited the lawyer, were a shade beyond him. Then came the brewer. The days had not arrived when brewing—at least, on the large scale—is considered to be more respectable than a learned profession, and Mrs. Colston, notwithstanding her wealth, was incessantly forced by the lawyer's wife to confess subordination. The brewer kept three or four horses for pleasure, and the lawyer kept only one; but "Colston's Entire" was on a dozen boards in the town, and he supplied private families and sent in bills. The position of Mrs. Butcher was perhaps the most curious. She visited the rector, banker, lawyer, and brewer,

and was always well received, for she was clever, smart, young, and well behaved. She had established her position solely by her wits. She did not spend a quarter as much as Mrs. Colston, but she always looked better. She was well shaped, to begin with, and the fit of her garments was perfect. Not a wrinkle was to be seen in gown, gloves, or shoes. Mrs. Colston's fashion was that imposed on her by the dressmaker, but Mrs. Butcher always had a style peculiarly her own. She knew the secret that a woman's attractiveness, so far as it is a matter of clothes, depends far more upon the manner in which they are made and worn than upon costliness. It was always thought that she ruled her husband and had just a spice of contempt for him. She gained thereby in Eastthorpe, at least with the men, for her superiority to him gave her an air which was slightly detached, free, and fascinating. She always drove when she went out with him, and it was really a sight worth seeing: she bolt upright with her hands well down, her pretty figure showing to the best advantage, the neat turn-out—for she was very

particular on this point and understood horses thoroughly—and Butcher leaning back, submissive but satisfied. She had made friends with the women too. She was much too shrewd to incur their hostility by openly courting the admiration of their husbands. She knew they did admire her, and that was enough. She was most deferential to Mrs. Colston, so much so that the brewer's wife openly expressed the opinion that she was evidently well bred, and wondered how Butcher managed to secure her. Furthermore she was useful, for her opinion, when anything had to be done, was always the one to be followed, and without her the church restoration would never have been such a success. Eastthorpe, like Mrs. Colston, often marvelled that Butcher should have been so fortunate. It mostly knew everything about the antecedents of everybody in the town, but Mrs. Butcher's were not so well known. She came from Cornwall, she always said, and Cornwall was a long way off in those days. Her maiden name was Treherne, and Mrs. Colston had been told that Treherne was good Cornish. Moreover,

soon after the marriage she found on the table, when she called on Mrs. Butcher, a letter which she could not help partly reading, for it lay wide open. All scruples were at once removed. It had a crest at the top, was dated from Helston, addressed Mrs. Butcher by a nickname, and was written in a most aristocratic hand—so Mrs. Colston averred to her intimate friends. She could not finish the perusal before Mrs. Butcher came into the room; but she had read enough, and the doctor's elect was admitted at once without reservation. Eastthorpe was slightly mistaken, but Mrs. Butcher's history cannot be told here.

So much by way of digression on Eastthorpe society.

Mrs. Furze carried her point as usual. As for Catharine, she did not object, for there was nothing in Eastthorpe attractive to her. The Limes, Abchurch, was the "establishment" chosen. It was kept by the Misses Ponsonby, Abchurch being a large village five miles further eastward. It was a peculiar institution. It was a school for girls, but not for little girls, and it was also an educational home for young ladies up to one-

or two-and-twenty whose training had been neglected or had to be completed beyond the usual limits. It was widely known, and, as its purpose was special, it had little or no competition, and consequently flourished. Many parents who had become wealthy, and who hardly knew the manners and customs of the class to which they aspired, sent their daughters to the Limes. The Misses Ponsonby—Miss Ponsonby and Miss Adela Ponsonby—were of Irish extraction, and had some dim connection with the family of that name. They also preserved in their Calvinistic evangelicalism a trace of the Cromwellian Ponsonby, the founder of the race. There was a difference of two years in the age of the two ladies, but no perceptible difference in their characters. The same necessity to conceal or suppress all individuality on subjects disputable in their own sect had been imposed on each. Both had the same "views" on all matters religious and social, and both of them confessed that on many points their "views" were "strict" —whatever that singular phrase may have meant. Nevertheless, they displayed remarkable tact in

reconciling parents with the defects and peculiarities of their children. There were always girls in the school of varying degrees of intelligence, from absolute stupidity to brilliancy, but the report at the end of the term was so fashioned that the father and mother of the idiot were not offended, and the idiocy was so handled that it appeared to have some advantages. If Miss Carter had been altogether unable to master the French verbs, or to draw the model vase until the teacher had put in nearly the whole of the outline, there was a most happy counterpoise, as a rule, in her moral conduct. In these days of effusive expression, when everybody thinks it his duty to deliver himself of everything in him—doubts, fears, passions—no matter whether he does harm thereby or good, the Misses Ponsonby would be considered intolerably dull and limited. They did not walk about without their clothes—figuratively speaking—it was not then the fashion. They were, on the contrary, heavily draped from head to foot, but underneath the whalebone and padding, strange to say, were real live women's hearts. They knew what it was

to hope and despair; they knew what it was to reflect that with each of them life might and ought to have been different; they even knew what it was sometimes to envy the beggar-woman on the doorstep of the Limes who asked for a penny and clasped a child to her breast. We mistake our ancestors who read Pope and the *Spectator*. They were very much like ourselves essentially, but they did not believe that there was nothing in us which should be smothered or strangled. Perhaps some day we shall go back to them, and find that the "Rape of the Lock" is better worth reading and really more helpful than magazine metaphysics. Anyhow, it is certain that the training which the Misses Ponsonby had received, although it may have made them starched, prim, and even uninteresting, had an effect upon their character not altogether unwholesome, and prevented any public crying for the moon, or any public charge of injustice against its Maker because it is unattainable.

The number of girls was limited to thirty. The house was tall, four-square, built of white brick about the year 1780, had a row of little pillars

running along the roof at the top, and a Grecian portico. It was odd that there should be such a house in Abchurch, but there it was. It was erected by a Spitalfields silk manufacturer, whose family belonged to those parts. He thought to live in it after his retirement, but he came there to die. The studies of the pupils were superintended by the Misses Ponsonby and sundry teachers, all female, except the drawing-master and the music-master. The course embraced the usual branches of a superior English education, French, Italian, deportment, and the use of the globes, but, as the Misses Ponsonby truly stated in their prospectus, their sole aim was not the inculcation of knowledge, but such instruction as would enable the young ladies committed to their charge to move with ease in the best society, and, above everything, the impression of correct principles in morality and religion. In this impression much assistance was given by the Reverend Theophilus Cardew, the rector of the church in the village. The patronage was in the hands of the Simeonite trustees, and had been bought by them in the first fervour of the movement.

The thirty pupils occupied fifteen bedrooms, although each had a separate bed, and to Catharine was allotted Miss Julia Arden, a young woman with a pretty, pale face, and black hair worn in ringlets. Her head was not firmly fixed on her shoulders, and was always in motion, as if she had some difficulty in balancing it, the reason being, not any physical defect, but a wandering imagination, which never permitted her to look at any one thing steadily for an instant. Nine-tenths of what she said was nonsense, but her very shallowness gave occasionally a certain value and reality to her talk, for the simple reason that she was incapable of the effort necessary to conceal what she thought for the moment. In her studies she made not the slightest progress, for her memory was shocking. She confounded all she was taught, and never could recollect whether the verb was conjugated and the noun declined, or whether it was the other way round, to use one of her favourite expressions, so that her preceptors were compelled to fall back, more exclusively than with her schoolfellows, on her moral conduct, which was out-

wardly respectable enough, but by the occupant of the other bed might perhaps have been reported on in terms not quite so satisfactory as those in the quarterly form signed by Miss Ponsonby.

Catharine's mother came with her on a Saturday afternoon, but left in the evening. At half-past eight there were prayers. The girls filed into the drawing-room, sat round in a ring, of which the Misses Ponsonby formed a part, but with a break of about two feet right and left, the servants sitting outside near the door: a chapter was read, a prayer also read, and then, after a suitable pause, the servants rose from their knees, the pupils rose next, and the Misses Ponsonby last; the time which each division, servants, pupils, and Ponsonbys remained kneeling being graduated exactly in proportion to rank. A procession to the supper-room was then formed. Catharine found herself at table next to Miss Arden, with a spotless napkin before her, with silver forks and spoons, and a delicately served meal of stewed fruits, milk-puddings, bread-and-butter, and cold water.

Everything was good, sweet, and beautifully clean, and there was enough. At half-past nine, in accordance with the usual practice, one of the girls read from a selected book. On Saturday a book, not exactly religious, but related to religion as nearly as possible as Saturday is related to Sunday, was invariably selected. On this particular Saturday it was Clarke's "Travels in Palestine." Precisely as the clock struck ten the volume was closed and the pupils went to bed.

"I am sure I shall like you," observed Miss Arden, as they were undressing. "The girl who was here before was a brute, so dull and so vulgar. I hope you will like me."

"I hope so too."

"It's dreadful here: so different to my mother's house in Devonshire. We have a large place there near Torquay—do you know Torquay? And I have a horse of my own, on which I tear about during the holidays, and there are boats and sailing matches, and my brothers have so many friends, and I have all sorts of little affairs. I suppose you've had your affairs. Of

course you won't say. We never see a man here, except Mr. Cardew. Oh, isn't he handsome? He's only a parson, but he's such a dear; you'll see him to-morrow. I can't make him out: he's lovely, but he's queer, so solemn at times, like an owl in daylight. I'm sure he's well brought up. I wonder why he went into the church: he ought to have been a gentleman."

"But is he not a gentleman?"

"Oh, yes, of course he's a gentleman, but you know what I mean."

"No, I don't."

"There, now, you are one of those horrid creatures, I know you are, who never *will* understand, and do it on purpose. It is so aggravating."

"Well, but you said he was not a gentleman, and yet that he was a gentleman."

"You *are* provoking. I say he is a gentleman —but don't some gentlemen keep a carriage?— and his father is in business. Isn't that plain? You know all about it as well as I do."

"I still do not quite comprehend."

Catharine took a little pleasure in forcing people to be definite, and Miss Arden invariably fell back

on "you understand" whenever she herself did not understand. In fact, in exact proportion to her own inability to make herself clear to herself, did she always insist that she was clear to other people.

"I cannot help it if you don't comprehend. He's lovely, and I adore him."

Next morning, being Sunday, the Limes was, if possible, still more irreproachable; the noise of the household was more subdued; the passions appeared more utterly extinguished, and any indifferent observer would have said that from the Misses Ponsonby down to the scullery-maid, a big jug had been emptied on every spark of illegal fire, and blood was toast and water. Alas! it was not so. The boots were cleaned overnight to avoid Sunday labour, but when the milkman came, a handsome young fellow, anybody with ears near the window overhead might have detected a scuffling at the back door with some laughter and something like "Oh, don't!" and might have noticed that Elizabeth afterwards looked a little rumpled and adjusted her cap. Nor was she singular, for many of the young

women who were supposed to be studying a brief abstract of the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, in parallel columns, as arranged by the Misses Ponsonby, were indulging in the naughtiest thoughts and using naughty words as they sat in their bedrooms before the time for departure to church. At a quarter-past ten the girls assembled in the dining-room, and were duly marshalled. They did not, however, walk two-and-two like ordinary schools. In the first place, many of them were not children, and, in the second place, the Misses Ponsonby held that even walking to church was a thing to be taught, and they desired to turn out their pupils so that they might distinguish themselves in this art also as well-bred people. It was one of the points on which the Misses Ponsonby grew even eloquent. How, they said, are girls to learn to carry themselves properly if they march in couples? They will not do it when they leave the Limes, and will be utterly at fault. There is no day in the week on which more general notice is taken than on Sunday; there is no day on which differences are more apparent. The pupils therefore walked irre-

gularly, the irregularity being prescribed. The entering the church; the leaving the pews; the loitering and salutations in the churchyard; the slow, superior saunter homewards were all the result of lecture, study, and even of practice on week-days. "Deliberation, ease," said Miss Ponsonby, "are the key to this, as they are to so much in our behaviour, and surely on the Sabbath we ought more than on any other day to avoid indecorous hurry and vulgarity."

Catharine's curiosity, after what Miss Arden had said, was a little excited to know what kind of a man Mr. Cardew might be, and she imagined him a young dandy. She saw a man about thirty-five with dark brown hair, eyes set rather deeply in his head, a little too close together, a delicate, thin, very slightly aquiline nose, and a mouth with curved lips, which were, however, compressed as if with determination or downright resolution. There was not a trace of dandyism in him, and he reminded her immediately of a portrait she had seen of Edward Irving in a shop at Eastthorpe.

He stood straight up in the pulpit reading from a little Testament he held in his hand, and when

he had given out his text he put the Testament down and preached without notes. His subject was a passage in the life of Jesus taken from Luke xviii. 18 :—

18. *And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

19. *And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? None is good, save one, that is God.*

20. *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and mother.*

21. *And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.*

22. *Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me.*

Mr. Cardew did not approach his theme circuitously or indifferently, but seemed in haste to be on close terms with it, as if it had dwelt with him and he was eager to deliver his message.

"I beseech you," he began, "endeavour to make this scene real to you. A rich man, an official,

comes to Jesus, calls Him Teacher—for so the word is in the Greek—and asks Him what is to be done to inherit eternal life. How strange it is that such a question should be so put! how rare are the occasions on which two people approach one another so nearly! Most of us pass days, weeks, months, years in intercourse with one another, and nothing which even remotely concerns the soul is ever mentioned. Is it that we do not care? Mainly that, and partly because we foolishly hang back from any conversation on what it is most important we should reveal, so that others may help us. Whenever you feel any promptings to speak of the soul or to make any inquiries on its behalf, remember it is a sacred duty not to suppress them.

"This ruler was happy in being able to find a single authority to whom he could appeal for an answer. If anybody wishes for such an answer now, he can find no oracle sole and decisive. The voices of the Church, the sects, the philosophers are clamorous but discordant, and we are bewildered. And yet, as I have told you over and over again in this pulpit, it is absolutely necessary

that you should have one and one only supreme guide. To say nothing of eternal salvation, we must, in the conduct of life, shape our behaviour by some one standard, or the result is chaos. We must have some one method or principle which is to settle beforehand how we are to do this or that, and the method or principle should be Christ. Leaving out of sight altogether His Divinity, there is no temper, no manner so effectual, so happy as His for handling all human experience. Oh, what a privilege it is to meet with anybody who is controlled into unity, whose actions are all directed by one consistent force!

"Jesus, as if to draw from this ruler all that he himself believed, tells him to keep the Law. The Law, however, is insufficient, and it is noteworthy that the ruler felt it to be so. To begin with it is largely negative: there are three negatives in this twentieth verse for one affirmative, and negations cannot redeem us. The law is also external. As a proof that it is ineffectual, I ask, Have you ever *rejoiced* in it? Have you ever been kindled by it? Have all its precepts ever moved you like one single item in the story of the

love of Jesus? Is the man attractive to you who has kept the law and done nothing more? Would not the poor woman who anointed our Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair be more welcome to you than the holy people who had simply never transgressed?

"We are struck with the magnitude of the demand made by Jesus on this ruler. To obtain eternal life he was to sell all he had, give up house, friends, position, respectability, and lead a vagrant life in Palestine with this poor carpenter's son. Alas! eternal life is not to be bought on lower terms. Beware of the damnable doctrine that it is easy to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is to be obtained only by the sacrifice of *all* that stands in the way, and it is to be observed that in this, as in other things, men will take the first, the second, the third—nay, even the ninety-ninth step, but the hundredth and last they will not take. Do you really wish to save your soul? Then the surrender must be absolute. What! you will say, am I to sell everything? If Christ comes to you—*yes*. Sell not only your property, but your very self. Part with all your preferences, your loves,

your thoughts, your very soul, if only you can gain Him, and be sure too that He will come to you in a shape in which it will not be easy to recognise Him. What a bargain, though, this ruler would have made! He would have given up his dull mansion in Jerusalem, Jerusalem society, which cared nothing for *him*, though it doubtless called on him, made much of him, and even professed undying friendship with him; he would have given this up, nothing but this, and he would have gained those walks with Jesus across the fields, and would have heard Him say, 'Consider the lilies!' 'Oh, yes, we would have done it at once!' we cry. I think not, for Christ is with us even now."

Curiously enough, the exordium was a piece of the most commonplace orthodoxy, lugged in, Heaven knows how, and delivered monotonously, in strong contrast to the former part of the discourse.—M. R.

These notes, made by one who was present, are the mere ashes, cold and grey, of what was once a fire. Mr. Cardew was really eloquent, and conse-

quently a large part of the effect of what he said is not to be reproduced. It is a pity that no record is possible of a great speaker. The writer of this history remembers when it was his privilege to listen continually to a man whose power over his audience was so great that he could sway them unanimously by a passion which was sufficient for any heroic deed. The noblest resolutions were formed under that burning oratory, and were kept, too, for the voice of the dead preacher still vibrates in the ears of those who heard him. And yet, except in their hearts, no trace abides, and when they are dead he will be forgotten, excepting in so far as that which has once lived can never die.

Whether it was the preacher's personality, or what he said, Catharine could hardly distinguish, but she was profoundly moved. Such speaking was altogether new to her; the world in which Mr. Cardew moved was one which she had never entered, and yet it seemed to her as if something necessary and familiar to her, but long lost, had been restored. She began now to look forward to Sunday with intense expectation;

a new motive for life was supplied to her, and a new force urged her through each day. It was with her as we can imagine it to be with some bud long folded in darkness which, silently in the dewy May night, loosens its leaves, and, as the sun rises, bares itself to the depths of its cup to the blue sky and the light.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Misses Ponsonby speedily came to a conclusion about Catharine, and she was forthwith labelled as a young lady of natural ability, whose education had been neglected, a type perfectly familiar, recurring every quarter, and one with which they were perfectly well able to deal. All the examples they had had before were ticketed in exactly the same terms, and, so classed, there was an end of further distinction. The means taken with Catharine were those which had been taken since the school began, and special attention was devoted to the branches in which she was most deficient, and which she disliked. Her history was deplorable, and her first task, therefore, was what were called dates. A table had been prepared of the kings and queens of England—when they came to the throne, and

when they died; and another table gave the years of all the battles. A third table gave the relationship of the kings and queens to each other, and the reasons for succession. All this had to be learned by heart. In languages, also, Catharine was singularly defective. Her French was intolerable and most inaccurate, and of Italian she knew nothing. Her dancing and deportment were so "provincial," as Miss Adela Ponsonby happily put it, that it was thought better that the dancing and deportment teacher should give her a few private lessons before putting her in a class, and she was consequently instructed alone in the rudiments of the art of entering and leaving a room with propriety, of sitting with propriety on a sofa when conversing, of reading a book in a drawing-room, of acknowledging an introduction, of sitting down to a meal and rising therefrom, and in the use of the pocket-handkerchief. She had particularly shocked the Misses Ponsonby on this latter point, as she was in the habit of blowing her nose energetically, "snorting," as one of the young ladies said colloquially, but with truth, and the deportment mistress had some difficulty in reducing her

to the whisper, which was all that was permitted in the Ponsonby establishment, even in cases of severe cold. On the other hand, in one or two departments she was far ahead of the other girls, particularly in arithmetic and geometry.

It was the practice on Monday morning for the girls to be questioned on the sermons of the preceding Sunday, and a very solemn business it was. The whole school was assembled in the big schoolroom, and Mr. Cardew, both the Misses Ponsonby being present, examined *viva voce*. One Monday morning, after Catharine had been a month at the school, Mr. Cardew came as usual. He had been preaching the Sunday before on a favourite theme, and his text had been, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin," and the examination at the beginning was in the biography of St. Paul, as this had formed a part of his discourse. No fault was to be found with the answers on this portion of the subject, but presently the class was in some difficulty.

"Can anybody tell me what meaning was assigned to the phrase, 'The body of this death'?"

No reply.

"Come, you took notes, and one or two interpretations were discarded for that which seemed to be more in accordance with the mind of St. Paul. Miss Arden"—Miss Arden was sitting nearest to Mr. Cardew—"cannot you say?"

Miss Arden shook her ringlets, smiled, and turned a little red, as if she had been complimented by Mr. Cardew's inquiries after the body of death, and, glancing at her paper, replied—

"The death of this body."

"Pardon me, that was one of the interpretations rejected."

"This body of death," said Catharine.

"Quite so."

Mr. Cardew turned hastily round to the new pupil, whom he had not noticed before, and looked at her steadily for a moment.

"Can you proceed a little and explain what that means?"

Catharine's voice trembled, but she managed to read from her paper: "It is strikingly after the manner of St. Paul. He opposes the two natures in him by the strongest words at his command—

death and life. One *is* death, the other *is* life, and he prays to be delivered from death; not the death of the body, but from death-in-life."

"Thank you; that is very nearly what I intended."

Mr. Cardew took tea at the Limes about once a fortnight with Mrs. Cardew. The meal was served in the Misses Ponsonby's private room, and the girls were invited in turn. About a fortnight after the examination on St. Paul's theory of human nature, Mr. and Mrs. Cardew came as usual, and Catharine was one of the selected guests. The company sat round the table, and Mrs. Cardew was placed between her husband and Miss Furze. The rector's wife was a fair-haired lady, with quiet, grey eyes, and regular, but not strikingly beautiful, features. Yet they were attractive, because they were harmonious, and betokened a certain inward agreement. It was a sane, sensible face, but a careless critic might have thought that it betokened an incapability of emotion, especially as Mrs. Cardew had a habit of sitting back in her chair, and generally let the conversation take its own course until it came very

close to her. She had a sober mode of statement and criticism, which was never brilliant and never stupid. It ought to have been most serviceable to her husband, because it might have corrected the exaggeration into which his impulse, talent, and power of pictorial representation were so apt to fall. She had been brought up as an Evangelical, but she had passed through no religious experiences whatever, and religion, in the sense in which Evangelicalism in the Church of England of that day understood it, was quite unintelligible to her. Had she been born a few years later she would have taken to science, and would have done well at it, but at that time there was no outlet for any womanly faculty, much larger in quantity than we are apt to suppose, which has an appetite for exact facts.

Mr. Cardew would have been called a prig by those who did not know him well. He had a trick of starting subjects suddenly, and he very often made his friends very uncomfortable by the precipitate introduction, without any warning, of remarks upon serious matters. Once even, shocking to say, he quite unexpectedly at a tea-party

made an observation about God. Really, however, he was not a prig. He was very sincere. He lived in a world of his own, in which certain figures moved which were as familiar to him as common life, and he consequently talked about them. He leaned in front of his wife and said to Catharine—

"Have you read much, Miss Furze?"

"No, very little."

"Indeed! I should have thought you were a reader. What have you read lately? any stories?"

"Yes, I have read Rasselas."

"Rasselas! Have you really? Now tell me what you think of it."

"Oh! I cannot tell you all."

"No, it is not fair to put the question in that way. It is necessary to have some training in order to give a proper account of the scope and purpose of a book. Can you select any one part which struck you, and tell me why it struck you?"

"The part about the astronomer. I thought all that is said about the dreadful effects of uncontrolled imagination was so wonderful."

"Don't you think those effects are exaggerated?"

She lost herself for a moment, as we have already seen she was in the habit of doing, or rather, she did not lose herself, but everything excepting herself, and she spoke as if nobody but herself were present.

"Not in the least exaggerated. What a horror to pass days in dreaming about one particular thing, and to have no power to wake!"

Her head had fallen a little forward; she suddenly straightened herself; the blood rose in her face, and she looked very confused.

"I should like to preach about Dr. Johnson," said Mr. Cardew.

"Really, Mr. Cardew," interposed the elder Miss Ponsonby, "Dr. Johnson is scarcely a sacred subject."

"I beg your pardon; I do not mean preaching on the Sabbath. I should like to lecture about him. It is a curious thing, Miss Ponsonby, that although Johnson was such a devout Christian, yet in his troubles his remedy is generally nothing but that of the Stoics—courage and patience."

Nobody answered, and an awkward pause followed. Catharine had not recovered from the shock of self-revelation, and the Misses Ponsonby were uneasy, not only because the conversation had taken such an unusual turn, but because a pupil had contributed. Mrs. Cardew, distressed at her husband's embarrassment, ventured to come to the rescue.

"I think Dr. Johnson quite right; when I am in pain, and nothing does me any good, I never have anything to say to myself, excepting that I must just be quiet, wait and bear it."

This very plain piece of pagan common sense made matters worse. Mr. Cardew seemed vexed that his wife had spoken, and there was once more silence for quite half a minnte. Miss Adela Ponsonby then rang the bell, and Catharine, in accordance with rule, left the room.

"Rather a remarkable young woman," carelessly observed the rector.

"Decidedly!" said both the Misses Ponsonby, in perfect unison.

"She has been much neglected," continued Miss Ponsonby. "Her manners leave much to be

desired. She has evidently not been accustomed to the forms of good society, or to express herself in accordance with the usual practice. We have endeavoured to impress upon her that, not only is much care necessary in the choice of topics of conversation, but in the mode of dealing with them. I thought it better not to encourage any further remarks from her, or I should have pointed out that, if what you say of Dr. Johnson is correct, as I have no doubt it is, considering the party in the church to which he belonged, it only shows that he was unacquainted experimentally with the consolations of religion."

"Isn't Mr. Cardew a dear?" asked Miss Arden, when she and Catharine were together.

"I hardly understand what you mean, and I have not known Mr. Cardew long enough to give any opinion upon him."

"How exasperating you are again! You *do* know what I mean; but you always pretend never to know what anybody means."

"I do *not* know what you mean."

"Why, isn't he handsome; couldn't you doat on him, and fall in love with him?"

"But he's married."

"You fearful Catharine! of course he's married; you do take things so seriously."

"Well, I'm more in the dark than ever."

"There you shall stick," replied Miss Arden, lightly shaking her curls and laughing. "Married! —yes, but they don't care for one another a straw."

"Have they ever told you so?"

"How very ridiculous! Cannot you see for yourself?"

"I am not sure: it is very difficult to know whether people really love one another, and often equally difficult to know if they dislike one another."

"What a philosopher you are! I'll tell you one thing, though: I believe he has just a little liking for me. Not for his life dare he show it. Oh, my goodness, wouldn't the fat be in the fire! Wouldn't there be a flare-up! What would the Ponsonbys do? Polite letter to papa announcing that my education was complete! That's what they did when Julia Jackson got in a mess. They couldn't have a scandal: so her education was complete, and home she went. Now the first time we are

out for a walk and he passes us and bows, you watch."

Miss Julia Arden went to sleep directly she went to bed, but Catharine, contrary to her usual custom, lay awake till she heard twelve o'clock strike from St. Mary, Abchurch. She started, and thought that she alone, perhaps, of all the people who lay within reach of those chimes had heard them. Why did she not go to sleep? She was unused to wakefulness, and its novelty surprised her with all sorts of vague terrors. She turned from side to side anxiously while midnight sounded, but she was young, and in ten minutes afterwards she was dreaming. She was mistaken in supposing that she was the only person awake in Abchurch that night. Mrs. Cardew heard the chimes, and over her their soothing melody had no power. When she and her husband left the Limes he broke out at once, with all the eagerness with which a man begins when he has been repeating to himself for some time every word of his grievance—

"I don't know how it is, Jane, but whenever I say anything I feel you are just the one person on whom it seems to make no impression. You have

a trick of repetition, and you manage to turn everything into a platitude. If you cannot do better than that, you might be silent."

He was right so far, that it is possible by just a touch to convert the noblest sentiment into commonplace. No more than a touch is necessary. The parabolic mirror will reflect the star to a perfect focus. The elliptical mirror, varying from the parabola by less than the breadth of a hair, throws an image which is useless. But Mr. Cardew was far more wrong than he was right. He did not take into account that what his wife said and what she felt might not be the same; that persons, who have no great command over language, are obliged to make one word do duty for a dozen, and that, if his wife was defective at one point, there were in her whole regions of unexplored excellence, of faculties never encouraged, and an affection to which he offered no response. He had not learned the art of being happy with her: he did not know that happiness is an art: he rather did everything he could do to make the relationship intolerable. He demanded payment in coin stamped from his own mint, and

if bullion and jewels had been poured before him he would have taken no heed of them.

She said nothing. She never answered him when he was angry with her. It was growing dark as they went home, and the tears came into her eyes and the ball rose in her throat, and her lips quivered. She went back—does a woman ever forget them?—to the hours of passionate protestation before marriage, to the walks together when he caught up her poor phrases and refined them, and helped her to see herself, and tried also to learn what few things she had to teach. It was all the worse because she still loved him so dearly, and felt that behind the veil was the same face, but she could not tear the veil away. Perhaps, as they grew older, matters might become worse, and they might have to travel together estranged down the long, weary path to death. Death! She did not desire to leave him, but she would have lain down in peace to die that moment if he could be made to see her afterwards as she knew she was—at least in her love for him. But then she thought what suffering the remembrance of herself would cost him, and she wished to live. He felt that she

moved her hand to her pocket, and he knew why it went there. He pitied her, but he pitied himself more, and though her tears wrought on him sufficiently to prevent any further cruelty, he did not repent.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. CARDEW met Catharine two or three times accidentally within the next fortnight. There were Dorcas meetings and meetings of all kinds at which the young women at the Limes were expected to assist. One afternoon, after tea, the room being hot, two or three of the company had gone out into the garden to work. Catharine and Mrs. Cardew sat by themselves at one corner, where the ground rose a little, and a seat had been placed under a large ash tree. From that point St. Mary's spire was visible, about half a mile away in the west, rising boldly, confidently, one might say, into the sky, as if it dared to claim that it too, although on earth and finite, could match itself against the infinite heaven above. On this particular evening the spire was specially obvious and attractive, for it divided the sunset

clouds, standing out black against the long, narrow interspaces of tender green which lay between. It was one of those evenings which invite confidence, when people cannot help drawing nearer than usual to one another.

"Is it not beautiful, Miss Furze?"

"Beautiful; the spire makes it so lovely."

"I wonder why."

"I am sure I do not know; but it is so."

"Catharine—you will not mind my calling you by your Christian name—you can explain it if you like."

Catharine smiled. "It is very kind of you, Mrs. Cardew, to call me Catharine, but I have no explanation. I could not give one to save my life, unless it is the contrast."

"You cannot think how I wish I had the power of saying what I think and feel. I cannot express myself properly—so my husband says."

"I sympathise with you. I am so foolish at times. Mr. Cardew, I should think, never felt the difficulty."

"No, and he makes so much of it. He says I do not properly enjoy a thing if I cannot in

some measure describe my enjoyment—articulate it, to use his own words."

He had inwardly taunted her, even when she was suffering, and had said to himself that her trouble must be insignificant, for there was no colour nor vivacity in her description of it. She did not properly even understand his own shortcomings. He could pardon her criticism, so he imagined, if she could be pungent. Mistaken mortal! it was her patient heroism which made her dumb to him about her sorrows and his faults. A very limited vocabulary is all that is necessary on such topics.

"I am just the same."

"Oh, no, you are not; Mr. Cardew says you are not."

"Mr. Cardew?—he has not noticed anything in me, I am certain, and if he has, why nobody could be less able to talk to him than I am."

Catharine knew nothing of what had passed between husband and wife—one scene amongst many—and consequently could not understand the peculiar earnestness, somewhat unusual with her, with which Mrs. Cardew dwelt upon this subject.

We lead our lives apart in close company with private hopes and fears unknown to anybody but ourselves, and when we go abroad we often appear inexplicable and absurd, simply because our friends have not the proper key.

"Do you think, Catharine—you know that, though I am older than you and married, I feel we are friends." Here Mrs. Cardew took Catharine's hand in hers. "Do you think I could learn how to talk? What I mean is, could I be taught how to say what is appropriate? I *do* feel something when Mr. Cardew reads Milton to me. It is only the words I want—words such as you have."

"Oh, Mrs. Cardew!"—Catharine came closer to her, and Mrs. Cardew's arm crept round her waist —"I tell you again I have not so many words as you suppose. I believe, though, that if people take pains they can find them."

"Couldn't you help me?"

"I? Oh, no! Mr. Cardew could. I never heard anybody express himself as he does."

"Mr. Cardew is a minister, and perhaps I should find it easier with you. Suppose I bring the

'Paradise Lost' out into the garden when we next meet, and I will read, and you shall help me to comment on it."

Catharine's heart went out towards her, and it was agreed that "Paradise Lost" should be brought, and that Mrs. Cardew would endeavour to make herself "articulate" thereon. The party broke up, and Catharine's reflections were not of the simplest order. Rather let us say her emotions, for her heart was busier than her head. Mrs. Cardew had deeply touched her. She never could stand unmoved the eyes of her dog when the poor beast came and laid her nose on her lap and looked up at her, and nobody could have persuaded her of the truth of Mr. Cardew's doctrine that the reason why a dog can only bark is that his thoughts are nothing but barks. Mrs. Cardew's appeal, therefore, was of a kind to stir her sympathy; but—had she not heard that Mr. Cardew had observed and praised her? It was nothing—ridiculously nothing; it was his duty to praise and blame the pupils at the Limes; he had complimented Miss Toogood on her Bible history the other day, and on her satisfactory account of the scheme of Redemption.

He had done it publicly, and he had pointed out the failings of the other pupils, she, Catharine, herself being included. He had reminded her that she had not taken into account the one vital point, that, as we are the Almighty Maker's creatures, His absolutely, we have no ground of complaint against Him in whatever way He may be pleased to make us. Nevertheless, just those two or three words Mrs. Cardew reported were like yeast, and her whole brain was in a ferment.

The Milton was produced next week. Since Catharine had been at the Limes she had read some of it, incited by Mr. Cardew, for he was an enthusiast for Milton. Mrs. Cardew was a bad reader; she had no emphasis, no light and shade, and she missed altogether the rhythm of the verse. To Catharine, on the other hand, knowing nothing of metre, the proper cadence came easily. They finished the first six hundred lines of the first book.

"You have not said anything, Catharine."

"No; but what have you to say?"

"It is very fine; but there I stick; I cannot say any more; I want to say more; that is where I

always am. I can *not* understand why I cannot go on as some people do; I just stop there with 'very fine.'"

"Cannot you pick out some passage which particularly struck you?"

"That is very true, is it not, that the mind can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven?"

"Most true; but did you not notice the description of the music?"

Catharine was fond of music, but only as an expression of her own feelings. For music as music—for a melody of Mozart, for example—that is to say, for pure art which is simply beauty, superior to our personality, she did not care. She liked Handel, and there was a choral society in Eastthorpe which occasionally performed the "Messiah."

"Don't you remember what Mr. Cardew said about it—it was remarkable that Milton should have given to music the power to chase doubt from the mind, doubt generally, and yet music is not argument?"

"Oh, yes, I recollect, but I do not quite comprehend him, and I told him I did not see how

music could make me sure of a thing if there was not a reason for it."

"What did he say then?"

"Nothing."

Mr. Cardew called that evening to take his wife home. He was told that she was in the garden with Miss Furze, and thither he at once went.

"Milton!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing with Milton here?"

"Miss Furze and I were reading the first book of the 'Paradise Lost' together."

Mrs. Cardew looked at her husband inquiringly, and with a timid smile, hoping he would show himself pleased. His brow, however, slightly wrinkled itself with displeasure. He had told her to read Milton, had said, "Fancy an English-woman with any pretensions to education not knowing Milton!" and now, when she was doing exactly what she was directed to do, he was vexed. He was annoyed to find he was precisely obeyed, and perhaps would have been in a better temper if he had been contradicted and resisted. Mrs. Cardew turned her head away. What was she to do with

him? Every one of her efforts to find the door had failed.

"What has struck you particularly in that book, Miss Furze?"

Catharine was about to say something, but she caught sight of Mrs. Cardew, and was arrested. At last she spoke, but what she said was not what she at first had intended to say.

"Mrs. Cardew and I were discussing the lines about doubt and music, and we cannot see what Milton means. We cannot see how music can make us sure of a thing if there is not good reason for it."

Catharine used the first person plural with the best intention, but her object was defeated. The rector recognised the words at once.

"Yes, yes," he replied, impatiently; "but, Miss Furze, you know better than that. Milton does not mean doubt whether an arithmetical proposition is true. I question if he means theological doubt. Doubt in that passage is nearer despondency. It is despondency taking an intellectual form and clothing itself with doubts which no reasoning will overcome, which re-shape themselves

the moment they are refuted." He stopped for a moment. "Don't you think so, Miss Furze?"

She forgot Mrs. Cardew, and looked straight into Mr. Cardew's face bent earnestly upon her.

"I understand."

Mrs. Cardew had lifted her eyes from the ground on which they had been fixed. "I think," said she, "we had better be going."

"We can go out by the door at the end of the garden, if you will go and bid the Misses Ponsonby good-bye."

Mrs. Cardew lingered a moment.

"I have bidden them good-bye," said her husband.

She went, and Miss Ponsonby detained her for a few minutes to arrange the details of an important quarterly meeting of the Dorcas Society for next week.

"What do you think of the subject of the 'Paradise Lost,' Miss Furze?"

"I hardly know; it seems so far away."

"Ah! that is just the point. I thought so once, but not now. Milton could not content himself with a common theme; nothing less than God

and the immortal feud between Him and Satan would suffice. Milton is representative to me of what I may call the heroic attitude towards existence. Mark, too, the importance of man in the book. Men and women are not mere bubbles—here for a moment and then gone—but they are actually important, all-important, I may even say, to the Maker of the universe and His great enemy. In this Milton follows Christianity, but what stress he lays on the point! Our temptation, notwithstanding our religion, so often is to doubt our own value. All appearances tend to make us doubt it. Don't you think so?"

Catharine looked earnestly at the excited preacher, but said nothing.

"I do not mean our own personal worth. The temptation is to doubt whether it is of the smallest consequence whether we are or are not, and whether our being here is not an accident. Oh, Miss Furze, to think that your existence and mine are part of the Divine eternal plan, and that without us it would be wrecked! Then there is Satan. Milton has gone beyond the Bible, beyond what is authorised in giving such a distinct, power-

ful, and prominent individuality to Satan. You will remember that in the great celestial battle—

"'Long time in even scale
The battle hung.'

But what a wonderful conception that is of the great antagonist of God! It comes out even more strongly in the 'Paradise Regained.' Is it not a relief to think that the evil thought in you or me is not altogether yours and mine, but is foreign; that it is an incident in the war of wars, an attack on one of the soldiers of the Most High?"

Mr. Cardew paused.

"Have you never written anything which I could read?"

"Scarcely anything. I wrote some time ago a little story of a few pages, but it was never published. I will lend you the manuscript, but you will please remember that it is anonymous, and that I do not wish the authorship revealed. I believe most people would not think any the better of me, certainly as a clergyman, if they knew it was mine."

"That is very kind of you."

Catharine felt the distinction, the confidence. The sweetest homage which can be offered us is to be entrusted with something which others would misinterpret.

"I should like, Miss Furze, to have some further talk with you about Milton, but I do not quite see" (musingly) "how it is to be managed."

"Could you not tell us something about him when you and Mrs. Cardew next have tea with us at the Limes?"

"I do not think so. I meant with you, yourself. It is not easy for me to express myself clearly in company—at any rate, I should not hear your difficulties. You seem to possess a sympathy which is unusual, and I should be glad to know more of your mind."

"When Mrs. Cardew comes here, could you not fetch her, and could we not sit out here together?"

He hesitated. They were walking slowly over the grass towards the gate, and were just beginning to turn off to the right by the side path between the laurels. At that point, the lawn being levelled and raised, there were two stone steps. In descending them Catharine slipped, and he caught her arm.

She did not fall, but he did not altogether release her for at least some seconds.

"Mrs. Cardew has no liking for poetry."

Catharine was silent.

"It is quite a new thing to me, Miss Furze, to find anybody in Abchurch who cares anything for that which is most interesting to me."

"But, Mr. Cardew, I am sure I have not shown any particular capacity, and I am very ignorant, for I have read very little."

"It does not need much to reveal what is in a person. It would be a great help to me if we could read a book together. This self-imprisonment day after day and self-imposed reticence is very unwholesome. I would give much to have a pupil or a friend whose world is my world."

To Catharine it seemed as if she was being sucked in by a whirlpool and carried she knew not whither. They had reached the gate, and he had taken her hand in his to bid her good-bye. She felt a distinct and convulsive increase of pressure, and she felt also that she returned it. Suddenly something passed through her brain swift as the flash of the swiftest blazing meteor: she dropped his hand, and, turning

instantly, went back to the house, retreating behind the thick bank of evergreens.

"Where is Miss Furze?" said Mrs. Cardew, who came down the path a minute or two afterwards.

"I do not know: I suppose she is indoors."

"A canting, hypocritical parson, type not uncommon, described over and over again in novels, and thoroughly familiar to theatre-goers." Such, no doubt, will be the summary verdict passed upon Mr. Cardew. The truth is, however, that he did not cant, and was not a hypocrite. One or two observations here may perhaps be pertinent. The accusation of hypocrisy, if we mean lofty assertion, and occasional and even conspicuous moral failure, may be brought against some of the greatest figures in history. But because David sinned with Bathsheba, and even murdered her husband, we need not discredit the sincerity of the Psalms. The man was inconsistent, it is true, inconsistent exactly because there was so much in him that was great, for which let us be thankful. Let us take notice, too, of what lies side by side quietly in our own souls. God help us if all that is good

in us is to be invalidated by the presence of the most contradictory evil.

Secondly, it is a fact that vitality means passion. It does not mean avarice or any of the poor, miserable vices. If David had been a wealthy and most pious Jerusalem shopkeeper, who subscribed largely to missionary societies to the Philistines, but who paid the poor girls in his employ only two shekels a week, refusing them ass-hire when they had to take their work three parts of the way to Bethlehem, and turning them loose at a minute's warning, he certainly would not have been selected to be part author of the Bible, even supposing his courtship and married life to have been most exemplary and orthodox. We will, however, postpone any further remarks upon Mr. Cardew: a little later we shall hear something about his early history, which may perhaps explain and partly exculpate him. As to Catharine, she escaped. It is vexatious that a complicated process in her should be represented by a single act which was transacted in a second. It would have been much more intelligible if it could have written itself in a dramatic conversation extending over

two or three pages, but, as the event happened, so it must be recorded. The antagonistic and fiercely combatant forces did *so* issue in that deed, and the present historian has no intention to attempt an analysis. One thing is clear to him, that the quick stride up the garden path was urged not by any single, easily predominating impulse which had been enabled to annihilate all others. Do not those of us, who have been mercifully prevented from damning ourselves before the whole world, who have succeeded and triumphed—do we not know, know as we know hardly anything else, that our success and our triumph were due to superiority in strength by just a grain, no more, of our better self over the raging rebellion beneath it? It was just a tremble of the tongue of the balance: it might have gone this way, or it might have gone the other, but by God's grace it was this way settled—God's grace, as surely, in some form of words, everybody must acknowledge it to have been. When she reached her bedroom she sat down with her head on her hands, rose, walked about, looked out of window in the hope that she might see him, thought of Mrs. Cardew; forgot

her ; dwelt on what she had passed through till she almost actually felt the pressure of his hand ; cursed herself that she had turned away from him ; prayed for strength to resist temptation, and longed for one more chance of yielding to it.

The next morning a little parcel was left for Miss Furze. It contained the promised story, which is here presented to my readers :—

"Did he Believe?

"Charmides was born in Greece, but about the year 300 A.D. was living in Rome. He had come there, like many of his countrymen, to pursue his calling as sculptor in the imperial city, and he cherished a great love for his art. He knew too well that it was not the art of the earlier days of Athens, and that he could never catch the spirit of that golden time, but he loved it none the less. He was also a philosopher in his way. He had read not only the literature of Greece, but that of his adopted land, and he was especially familiar with Lucretius and his pupil Virgil. His intellectual existence, however, was not particularly happy.

Rome was a pleasant city ; his occupation was one in which he delighted ; the thrill of a newly noticed Lucretian idea or of a tender touch in Virgil were better to him than any sensual pleasure, but his dealings with his favourite authors ended in his own personal emotion, and it was sad to think that the Hermes on which he had spent himself to such a degree should become a mere decoration to a Roman nobleman's villa, valued only because it cost so much, and that nobody who looked at it would ever really care for it. Once, however, he was rewarded. He had finished a Pallas Athene just as the sun went down. He was excited, and after a light sleep he rose very early and went into the studio with the dawn. There stood the statue, severe, grand in the morning twilight, and if there was one thing in the world clear to him, it was that what he saw was no inanimate mineral mass, but something more. It was no mere mineral mass with an outline added. Part of the mind which formed the world was in it, actually in it, and it came to Charmides that intellect, thought, had their own rights, that they were as much a fact as the stone, and that what he had done

was simply to realise a Divine idea which was immortal, no matter what might become of its embodiment. The weight of the material world lifted, an avenue of escape seemed to open itself to him from so much that oppressed and deadened him, and he felt like a man in an amphitheatre of overhanging mountains, who should espy in a far-off corner some scarcely perceptible track, and on nearer inspection a break in the walled precipices, a promise, or at least a hint, of a passage from imprisonment to the open plain. It was nothing more than he had learned in his Plato, but the truth was made real to him, and he clung to it.

"Rome at the end of the third century was one of the most licentious of cities. It was invaded by all the vices of Greece, and the counterpoise of the Greek virtues was absent. The reasoning powers assisted rather than prevented the degradation of morals, for they dissected and represented as nothing all the motives which had hitherto kept men upright. The healthy and uncorrupted instinct left to itself would have been a sufficient restraint, but sophistry

argued and said, *What is there in it?*—and so the very strength and prerogative of man hired itself out to perform the office of making him worse than a beast. Charmides was unmarried, and it is not to be denied that though his life as a whole was pure, he had yielded to temptation, not without loathing himself afterwards. He did not feel conscious of any transgression of a moral law, for no such law was recognised, but he detested himself because he had been drawn into close contact with a miserable wretch simply in order to satisfy a passion, and in the touch of mercenary obscenity there was something horrible to him. It was bitter to him to reflect that, notwithstanding his aversion from it, notwithstanding his philosophy and art, he had been equally powerless with the uttermost fool of a young aristocrat to resist the attraction of the commonest of snares. What were his books and fine pretensions worth if they could not protect him in such ordinary danger? Thus it came to pass that after a fall, when he went back to his work, it was so unreal to him, such a mockery, that days often elapsed before he could do anything. It was a mere toy, a dilettante

dissipation, the embroidery of corruption. Oh, for a lawgiver, for a time of restraint, for the time of Regulus and the republic! Then, said Charmides to himself, my work would have some value, for heroic obedience would be behind it. He was right, for the love of the beautiful cannot long exist where there is moral pollution. The love of the beautiful itself is moral—that is to say, what we love in it is virtue. A perfect form or a delicate colour are the expression of something which is destroyed in us by subjugation to the baser desires or meanness, and he who has been unjust to man or woman misses the true interpretation of a cloud or falling wave.

"One night Charmides was walking through the lowest part of the city, and he heard from a mere hovel the sound of a hymn. He knew what it was—that it was the secret celebration of a religious rite by the despised sect of the Jews and their wretched proselytes. The Jews were especially hateful to him and to all cultured people in Rome. They were typical of all the qualities which culture abhorred. No Jew had ever produced anything lovely in any

department whatever—no picture, statue, melody, nor poem. Their literature was also barbaric: there was no consecutiveness in it, no reasoning, no recognition in fact of the reason. It was a mere mass of legends without the exquisite charm and spiritual intention of those of Greece, of bloody stories and obscure disconnected prophecies by shepherds and peasants. Their god was a horror, a boor upon a mountain, wielding thunder and lightning. Aphrodite was perhaps not all that could be wished, but she was divine compared with the savage Jehovah. It was true that a recent Jewish sect professed better things and recognised as their teacher a young malefactor who was executed when Tiberius was emperor. So far, however, as could be made out he was a poor crack-brained demagogue, who dreamed of restoring a native kingdom in Palestine. What made the Jews especially contemptible to culture was that they were retrograde. They strove to put back the clock. There is only one path, so culture affirmed, and that is the path opened by Aristotle, the path of rational logical progress from what we already know to something not now

known, but which can be known. If our present state is imperfect, it is because we do not know enough. Every other road, excepting this, the king's highway, leads into a bog. These Jews actually believed in miracles; they had no science, and thought they could regenerate the world by hocus-pocus. They ought to be suppressed by law, and, if necessary, put to death for they bred discontent.

"Nevertheless, Charmides decided to enter the hovel. He was in an idle mood, and he was curious to see for himself what the Jews were like. He pushed open the door, and when he went in he found himself in a low, mean room very dimly lighted and crowded with an odd medley of Greeks, Romans, tolerably well-dressed persons, and slaves. The poor and the slaves were by far the most numerous. The atmosphere was stifling, and Charmides sat as near the door as possible. Next to him was a slave-girl, not beautiful, but with a peculiar expression on her face very rare in Rome at that time. The Roman women were, many of them, lovely, but their loveliness was cold—the loveliness of indifference. The some-

what common features of this slave, on the contrary, were lighted up with eagerness: to her there was evidently something in life of consequence—nay, of immense importance. There were few of her betters in Rome to whom anything was of importance. A hymn at that moment was being sung, the words of which Charmides could not catch, and when it was finished an elderly man rose and read what seemed the strangest jargon about justification and sin. The very terms used were in fact unintelligible. The extracts were from a letter addressed to the sect in Rome by one Paul, a disciple of that Jesus who was crucified. After the reading was over came an address, very wild in tone and gesture, and equally unintelligible, and then a prayer or invocation, partly to their god, but also, as it seemed, to this Jesus, who evidently ranked as a dæmon, or perhaps as Divine. Charmides was quite unaffected. The whole thing appeared perfect nonsense, not worth investigation, but he could not help wondering what there was in it which could so excite that girl, whom he could hardly conclude to be a fool, and whose earnest-

ness was a surprise to him. He thought no more about the affair until some days afterwards when he happened to visit a friend. Just as he was departing he met this very slave in the porch. He involuntarily stopped, and she whispered to him.

"'You will not betray us?'

"'I! Certainly not.'

"'I will lend you this. Read it and return it to me.'" So saying, she vanished.

"Charmides, when he reached home, took out the manuscript. He recognised it as a copy of the letter which he had partly heard at the meeting. He was somewhat astonished to find that it was written by a man of learning, who was evidently familiar with classic authors, but surely never was scholarship pressed into such a service! The confusion of metaphor, the suddenness of transition, the illogical muddles were bad enough, but the chief obstacle to comprehension was that the author's whole scope and purpose, the whole circle of his ideas, were outside Charmides altogether. He was not attracted any more than he was at the meeting, but he was a

little piqued because Paul had certainly been well educated, and he determined to attend the meeting again. This time he was late, and did not arrive till it was nearly at an end. His friend was there, and again he sat down next to her. When they went out it was dark, and he walked by her side.

"'Have you read the letter?'

"'Yes, but I do not understand it, and I have brought it back.'

"'May Christ the Lord open your eyes!'

"'Who is this Christ whom you worship?'

"'The Son of God, He who was crucified; the man Jesus; He who took upon Himself flesh to redeem us from our sins; in whom by faith we are justified and have eternal life.'

"It was all pure Hebrew to him, save the phrase 'Son of God,' which sounded intelligible.

"'You are Greek,' he said, for he recognised her accent although she spoke Latin.

"'Yes, from Corinth: my name is Demariste;' and she explained to him that, although she was a slave, she was partly employed in teaching Greek to the children of her mistress.

"'If you are Greek and well brought up, you must know that I cannot comprehend a word of what you have spoken. It is Judaism.'

"'To me, too,' she replied, speaking Greek to him, 'it was incomprehensible, but God by the light which lighteth every man hath brought me into His marvellous light, and now this that I have told you is exceedingly clear—nay, clearer than anything which men say they see.'

"'Tell me how it happened.'

"'When I first came to Rome I had a master who desired to make me his concubine, and I hated him; but what strength had I?—and I was tempted to yield. My parents were dead; I had no friends who cared for me—what did it matter! I had read in my books of the dignity of the soul, bnt that was a poor weapon with which to fight, and moreover sin was not exceeding sinful to me. By God's grace I was brought amongst these Christians, and I was convinced of sin. I saw that it was not only transgression against myself, but against the eternal decrees of the Most High, against those decrees which, as one of our own poets still dear to me has said—

"'Ου γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθὲς, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
ζῇ ταῦτα, κούδεὶς ἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.'[1]

"'I saw that all art, all learning, everything which men value, were as straw compared with God's commands, and that it would be well to destroy all our temples, and statues, and all that we have which is beautiful, if we could thereby establish the kingdom of God within us, and so become heirs of the life everlasting. Oh, my friend, my friend in Christ, I hope, believe me, Rome will perish, and we shall all perish, not because we are ignorant, but because we have not obeyed His word. But how was I to obey it? Then I heard told the life of Christ the Lord: how God the Father in His infinite pity sent His Son into the world; how He lived amongst us and died a shameful death upon the cross that we might not die; and all His strength passed into me and became mine through faith, and I was saved; saved for this life; saved eternally; justified through Him; worthy to

[1] "Not now nor of yesterday are they, but for ever they live, and no one knows whence to date their appearance."—*Sophocles*, "*Antigone.*"

wait for Him and meet Him at His coming, for He shall come, and I shall be for ever with the Lord.'

"Demariste stood straight upright as she spoke, and the light in her transfigured her countenance as the sun penetrating a grey mass of vapour informs it with such an intensity of brightness that the eye can scarcely endure it. It was a totally new experience to Charmides, an entire novelty in Rome. He did not venture to look in her face directly, for he felt that there was nothing in him equal to its sublime, solemn pleading.

"'I do not know anything of your Jesus,' he said at last, timidly; 'upon what do you rest His claims?'

"'Read His life. I will lend it to you; you will want no other evidence for Him. And was He not raised from the dead to reign for ever at His Father's right hand? No, keep the letter for a little while, and perhaps you will understand it better when you know upon what it is based.'

"A day or two afterwards the manuscript was

sent to him secretly with many precautions. He was not smitten suddenly by it. The Palestinian tale, although he confessed it was much more to his mind than Paul, was still *rude.* It was once more the rudeness which was repellent, and which almost outweighed the pathos of many of the episodes and the undeniable grandeur of the trial and death. Moreover, it was full of superstition and supernaturalism, which he could not abide. He was in his studio after its first perusal, and he turned to an Apollo which he was carving. The god looked at him with such overpowering, balanced sanity, such a contrast to Christian incoherence and the rhapsodies of the letter to the Romans, that he was half ashamed of himself for meddling with it. He opened his Lucretius. Here was order and sequence ; he knew where he was ; he was at home. Was all this nought, were the accumulated labour and thought of centuries to be set aside and trampled on by the crude, frantic inspiration of clowns ? The girl's face, however, recurred to him ; he could not get rid of it, and he opened the biography again. He stumbled upon what now stand as

our twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew, containing the denunciation of the Pharisees, and the prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man. He was amazed at the new turn which was given to life, at the reasons assigned for the curses which were dealt to these Jewish doctors. They were damned for their lack of mercy, judgment, faith, for their extortion, excess, and because they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. They were fools and blind, but not through defects which would have condemned them in Greece and Rome at that day, but through failings of which Greece and Rome took small account. Charmides pondered and pondered, and saw that this Jew had given a new centre, a new pivot to society. This, then, was the meaning of the world as nearly as it could be said to have a single meaning. Read by the light of the twenty-third chapter, the twenty-fourth chapter was magnificent. 'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.' Was it not intelligible that He to whom right and wrong were so

diverse, to whom their diversity was the one fact for man, should believe that Heaven would proclaim and enforce it? He read more and more, until at last the key was given to him to unlock even that strange mystery, that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Still it was idle for him to suppose that he could ever call himself a Christian in the sense in which those poor creatures whom he had seen were Christians. Their fantastic delusions, their expectation that any day the sky might open and their Saviour appear in the body, were impossible to him; nor could he share their confidence that once for all their religion alone was capable of regenerating the world. He could not, it is true, avoid the reflection that the point was not whether the Christians were absurd, nor was it even the point whether Christianity was not partly absurd. The real point was whether there was not more certainty in it than was to be found in anything at that time current in the world. Here, in what Paul called faith, was a new spring of action, a new reason for the blessed

life, and, what was of more consequence, a new force by which men might be enabled to persist in it. He could not, we say, avoid this reflection; he could not help feeling that he was bound not to wait for that which was in complete conformity with an ideal, but to enlist under the flag which was carried by those who in the main fought for the right, and that it was treason to cavil and stand aloof because the great issue was not presented in perfect purity. Nevertheless, he was not decided, and could not quite decide. If he could have connected Christianity with his own philosophy; if it had been the outcome, the fulfilment of Plato, his duty would have been so much simpler; it was the complete rupture—so it seemed to him—which was the difficulty. His heart at times leaped up to join this band of determined, unhesitating soldiers; to be one in an army; to have a cause; to have a banner waving over his head; to have done with isolation, aloofness, speculation ending in nothing, and dreams which profited nobody; but even in those moments when he was nearest to a confession of discipleship he

was restrained by faintness and doubt. If he were to enrol himself as a convert his conversion would be due not to an irresistible impulse, but to a theory, to a calculation, one might almost say, that such and such was the proper course to take.

"He went again to the meeting, and he went again and again. One night, as he came home, he walked as he had walked before, with Demariste. She was going as far as his door for the manuscript which he had now copied for his own use. As they went along a man met them who raised a lantern, and directed it full in their faces.

"'The light of death,' said Demariste.

"'Who is he?'

"'I know him well; he is a spy. I have often seen him at the door of our assembly.'

"'Do you fear death?'

"'I? Has not Christ died?'

"Charmides had fallen in love with this slave, but it was love so different from any love which he had felt before for a woman, that it ought to have had some other name. It was a love of the soul, of that which was immortal, of God in her;

it was a love, too, of no mere temporary phenomenon, but of reality outlasting death into eternity. There was thus a significance, there was a grandeur in it wanting to any earthly love. It was the new love with which men were henceforth to love women—the love of Dante for Beatrice.

"She waited at the door while he went inside to fetch the parchment. He brought it out and gave it to her, and as he stood opposite to her he looked in her face, and her eyes were not averted. He caught her hand, but she drew back.

"'Tis but for a day or two,' she said; 'a week will see the end.'

"'A week!' he cried. 'Oh, my Demariste, rather a week with thee than an age with anything less than thee!'

"'You will have to die too. Dare you die? The spirit may be willing, but the flesh may be weak.'

"'Death! Yes, death, if only I am yours!'

"'Nay, nay, my beloved, not for me, but for the Lord Jesus.'

"He bent nearer to her; his head was on her neck, and his arms were round her body. Oh, son and daughter of Time! oh, son and daughter of Eternity!

"He had hardly returned to his house, when he was interrupted by his friend Callippus, just a little the worse for wine.

"'What new thing is this?' said Callippus. 'I hear you have consorted with the Jews, and have been seen at their assembly.'

"'True, my friend.'

"'True! By Jupiter! what is the meaning of it? You do not mean to say that you are bitten by the mad dog?'

"'I believe.'

"'Oh, by God, that it should have come to this! Are you not ashamed to look him in the face?' pointing to the Apollo statue. 'Ah! the old prophecy is once more verified!—

> "'Tutemet a nobis iam quovis tempore vatum
> terriloquis victus dictis desciscere quæres.'[1]

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[1] "You, yourself, some time or other, overcome by the terror-speaking tales of the seers, will seek to fall away from us."—*Lucretius*, "*De Rerum Natura*."

But I must be prudent. I saw somebody watching your house on the other side of the street. If I am caught they will think I belong to the accursed sect too. Farewell.'

"The morning came, and about an hour after Charmides had risen two soldiers presented themselves. He was hurried away, brought before the judges, and examined. Some little pity was felt for him by two or three members of the court, as he was well known in Rome, and one of them condescended to argue with him and to ask him how he could become ensnared by a brutal superstition which affirmed, so it was said, the existence of devil-possessed pigs, and offered sacrifices to them.

"'You,' said he, 'an artist and philosopher—if it be true that you are a pervert, you deserve a heavier punishment than the scum whom we have hitherto convicted.'

"'For Christ and His cross!' cried Charmides.

"'Take him away!'

"The next day Charmides and Demariste met outside the prison gates. They were chained together in mockery, the seducer, Demariste, and

the seduced, Charmides. They were marched through the streets of Rome, the crowd jeering them and thronging after them to enjoy the sport of their torments and death. Charmides saw the eyes of Demariste raised heavenwards and her lips moving in prayer.

"'He has heard me,' she said, 'and you will endure.'

"He pressed her hand, and replied, with unshaken voice, 'Fear not.'

"They came to the place of execution, but before the final stroke they were cruelly tortured. Charmides bore his sufferings in silence, but in her extremest agony the face of Demariste was lighted with rapture.

"'Look, look, my beloved, there, there!' trying to lift her mangled arm, 'Christ the Lord! One moment more and we are for ever with Him.'

"Charmides could just raise his head, and saw nothing but Demariste. He was able to turn himself towards her and move her hand to his lips, the second, only the second and the last kiss.

"So they died. Charmides was never considered a martyr by the Church. The circumstances were doubtful, and it was not altogether clear that he deserved the celestial crown."

CHAPTER IX.

THE school broke up next week for the summer holidays, and Catharine went home. Her mother was delighted with her daughter. She was less awkward, straighter, and her air and deportment showed the success of the plan. The father acquiesced, although he did not notice the change till Mrs. Furze had pointed it out. As to Mrs. Bellamy, she declared, when she met Catharine in the street the first market afternoon that "she had all at once become a woman grown." Mrs. Furze's separation from her former friends was now complete, but she had, unfortunately, not yet achieved admission into the superior circle. She had done so in a measure, but she was not satisfied. She felt that these people were not intimate with her, and that, although

she had screwed herself with infinite pains into a bowing acquaintance, and even into a shaking of hands, they formed a set by themselves, with their own secrets and their own mysteries, into which she could not penetrate. Their very politeness was more annoying than rudeness would have been. It showed they could afford to be polite. Had she been wealthy, she could have crushed all opposition by sheer weight of bullion; but in Eastthorpe everybody's position was known with tolerable exactitude, and nobody was deluded into exaggerating Mr. Furze's resources because of the removal to the Terrace. Eastthorpe, on the contrary, affirmed that the business had not improved, and that expenses had increased.

When Catharine came home a light suddenly flashed across Mrs. Furze's mind. What might not be done with such a girl as that! She was good-looking — nay, handsome; she had the manners which Mrs. Furze knew that she herself lacked, and Charlie Colston, aged twenty-eight, was still disengaged. It was Mrs. Furze's way, when she proposed anything to herself, to take no account of any obstacles,

and she had the most wonderful knack of belittling and even transmuting all moral objections. Mr. Charlie Colston was a well-known figure in Eastthorpe. He was an only son, about five feet eleven inches high, thin, unsteady on his legs, smooth-faced, unwholesome, and silly. He had been taken into his father's business because there was nothing else for him, and he was a mere shadow in it, despised by every cask-washer. There was nothing wicked recorded against him; he did not drink, he did not gamble, he cared nothing for horses or dogs; but Eastthorpe thought none the better of him for these negative virtues. He was not known to be immoral, but he was for ever playing with this girl or the other, smiling, mincing, toying, and it all came to nothing. A very unpleasant creature was Mr. Charlie Colston, a byword with women in Eastthorpe, even amongst the nursery-maids. Mrs. Furze knew all about this youth; but she brought out her philosopher's stone and used it with effect. She did not intend to mate Catharine with a fool, and make her miserable. If she could not have persuaded herself that the young man was

everything that could be desired she would have thought no more about him. The whole alchemical operation, however, of changing him into purest gold occupied only a few minutes, and the one thought now was how to drop the bait. It did cross her mind that Catharine herself might object; but she was convinced that if her daughter could have a distinct offer made to her, all opposition might somehow be quenched.

Fate came to her assistance, as it does always to those who watch persistently and with patience. One Sunday evening at church it suddenly began to rain. The Furze family had not provided themselves with umbrellas, but Mrs. Furze knew that Mr. Charlie Colston never went out without one. Her strategy, when the service was over, was worthy of Napoleon, and, with all the genius of a great commander, she brought her forces into exact position at the proper moment. She herself and Mr. Furze detained the elder Mr. Colston and his wife, and kept them in check a little way behind, so that Catharine and their son were side by side when the entrance was reached. Of course he could do nothing but offer Catharine

his umbrella, and his company on the way homewards, but to his utter amazement, and the confusion of Mrs. Furze, who watched intently the result of her manœuvres, Catharine somewhat curtly declined, and turned back to wait for her parents. Mr. Charlie rejoined his father and mother, who naturally forsook the Furzes at the earliest possible moment in such a public place as a church porch. In a few minutes the shower abated. Mrs. Furze could not say anything to her daughter; she could not decently appear to force Charlie on her by rebuking her for not responding to his generosity, but she was disappointed and embittered.

On the following morning Catharine announced her intention of going to Chapel Farm for a few days. Her mother remonstrated, but she knew she would have to yield, and Catharine went. Mrs. Bellamy poured forth the pent-up tale of three months—gossip we may call it if we wish to be contemptuous; but what is gossip? A couple of neighbours stand at the garden gate on a summer's evening and tell the news of the parish. They discuss the inconsistency of the

parson, the stony-heartedness of the farmer, the behaviour of this young woman and that young man; and what better could they do? They certainly deal with what they understand—something genuinely within their own circle and experience; and there is nothing to them in politics, British or Babylonian, of more importance. There is no better conversation than talk about Smith, Brown, and Harris, male and female, about Spot the terrier or Juno the mare. Catharine had many questions to answer about the school, but Mr. Cardew's name was not once mentioned.

One afternoon, late in August, Catharine had gone with the dog down to the riverside, her favourite haunt. Clouds, massive, white, sharply outlined, betokening thunder, lay on the horizon in a long line; the fish were active; great chub rose, and every now and then a scurrying dimple on the pool showed that the jack and the perch were busy. It was a day full of heat, a day of exultation, for it proclaimed that the sun was alive; it was a day on which to forget winter with its doubts, its despairs, and its indistinguishable grey; it was a day on which to believe in immor-

tality. Catharine was at that happy age when summer has power to warm the brain; it passed into her blood and created in her simple, uncontaminated bliss. She sat down close to an alder which overhung the bank. It was curious, but so it was, that her thoughts suddenly turned from the water and the thunderclouds and the blazing heat to Mr. Cardew, and it is still more strange that at that moment she saw him coming along the towing-path. In a minute he was at her side, but before he reached her she had risen.

"Good morning, Miss Furze."

"Mr. Cardew! What brings you here?"

"I have been here several times; I often go out for the day; it is a favourite walk."

He was silent, and did not move. He seemed prepossessed and anxious, taking no note of the beauty of the scene around him.

"How is Mrs. Cardew?"

"She is well, I believe."

"You have not left home this morning, then?"

"No; I was not at home last night."

"I think I must be going."

"I will walk a little way with you."

"My way is over the bridge to the farmhouse, where I am staying."

"I will go as far as you go."

Catharine turned towards the bridge.

"Is it the house beyond the meadows?"

"Yes."

It is curious how indifferent conversation often is just at the moment when the two who are talking may be trembling with passion.

"You should have brought Mrs. Cardew with you," said Catharine, tearing to pieces a water lily, and letting the beautiful white petals fall bit by bit into the river.

Mr. Cardew looked at her steadfastly, scrutinisingly, but her eyes were on the thunderclouds, and the lily fell faster and faster. The face of this girl had hovered before him for weeks, day and night. He never for a moment proposed to himself deliberate love for her—he could not do it, and yet he had come there, not, perhaps, consciously in order to find her, but dreaming of her all the time. He was literally possessed. The more he thought about her, the less did he see and hear of the world outside him, and no motive

for action found access to him which was not derived from her. Of course it was all utterly mad and unreasonable, for, after all, what did he really know about her, and what was there in her to lay hold of him with such strength? But, alas! thus it was, thus he was made; so much the worse for him. Was this a Christian believer? was he really sincere in his belief? He was sincere with a sincerity, to speak arithmetically, of the tenth power beyond that of his exemplary churchwarden Johnson, whose religion would have restrained him from anything warmer than the extension of a Sunday black-gloved finger-tip to any woman save "Mrs. J." Here he was by the riverside with her; he was close to her; nobody was present, but he could not stir nor speak! Catharine felt his gaze, although her eyes were not towards him. At last the lily came to an end, and she tossed the naked stalk after the flower. She loved this man; it was a perilous moment: one touch, a hair's breadth of oscillation, and the two would have been one. At such a crisis the least external disturbance is often decisive. The first note of the thunder was heard, and suddenly

the image of Mrs. Cardew presented itself before Catharine's eyes, appealing to her piteously, tragically. She faced Mr. Cardew.

"I am sorry Mrs. Cardew is not here. I wish I had seen more of her. Oh, Mr. Cardew! how I envy her! how I wish I had her brains for scientific subjects! She is wonderful. But I *must* be going; the thunder is distant: you will be in Eastthorpe, I hope, before the storm comes. Good-bye," and she had gone.

She did not go straight to the house, however, but went into the garden and again cursed herself that she had dismissed him. Who had dismissed him? Not she. How had it been done? She could not tell. She crept out of the garden and went to the corner of the meadow where she could see the bridge. He was still there. She tried to make up an excuse for returning; she tried to go back without one, but it was impossible. Something, whatever it was, stopped her; she struggled and wrestled, but it was of no avail, and she saw Mr. Cardew slowly retrace his steps to the town. Then she leaned upon the wall and found some relief in a great fit of sobbing. Consolation

she had none; not even the poor reward of conscience and duty. She had lost him, and she felt that, if she had been left to herself, she would have kept him. She went out again late in the evening. The clouds had passed away to the south and east, but the lightning still fired the distant horizon far beyond Eastthorpe and towards Abchurch. The sky was clearing in the west, and suddenly in a rift Arcturus, about to set, broke through and looked at her, and in a moment was again eclipsed. What strange confusion! What inexplicable contrasts! Terror and divinest beauty; the calm of the infinite interstellar space and her own anguish; each an undoubted fact, but each to be taken by itself as it stood: the star was there, the dark blue depth was there, but they were no answer to the storm or her sorrow.

She returned to Eastthorpe on the following day and immediately told her mother she should not go back to the Misses Ponsonby.

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